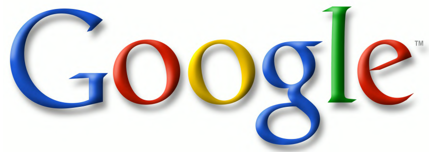

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St. Aldhelm: his life and times

George Forrest Browne

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THE ABBEY CHURCH, MALMESBURY, IN 1903

Frontispiece

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ST. ALDHELM:

HIS LIFE AND TIMES

Lectures delivered in the Cathedral Church of Bristol, Lent, 1902.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. G. F. BROWNE, D.D., D.C.L., F.S.A.,

BISHOP OF BRISTOL,
FORMERLY DISNEY PROFESSOR OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE TRACT COMMITTEE

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NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C.; 43, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, E.C.
BRIGHTON: 129, NORTH STREET.

1903

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ST. ALDHELM.

CHAPTER I

Connection of the See of Bristol with St. Aldhelm.—Composite character of the See.—Consequent powers of the Bishop.—Erection of Bristol into a City.—Period covered by the lectures.—Ecclesiastical condition of England in Aldhelm's early time.—Sources of information: William of Malmesbury, Faritius, the Handboc.—William's account of the Vale of Gloucester, and of Bristol.—The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

During the five years of my residence at St. Paul's, we had in each year two courses of lectures on English Church History, one course on some mediaeval period, and one on the earliest periods of the Church in these islands. The lectures on mediaeval periods were delivered by Dr. Creighton, Dr. Arthur Mason, and others; the five courses on our earliest Church History fell to my lot. They covered (1) the history of the Christian Church in these islands before the coming of St. Augustine, that is, the history of the British and Scotic Churches, Scotic meaning Irish,

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whether in Ireland, Scotland, or Britain; (2) the history of St. Augustine and his own companions; (3) the conversion of the Heptarchy; (4) some general lessons from our early Church History; and (5) the lives of Theodore of Canterbury and Wilfrith of York. These five courses have since been published in small volumes by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, two of them[1] with illustrations of some of the monuments of those ancient times which have come down to us.

In all of those lectures the lecturer spoke as a Northumbrian. He took Northumbria to be at once the most important and the most interesting of all the kingdoms of the Heptarchy; its history the most fascinating and the most instructive; its rulers the most national and the most independent; its first ecclesiastical traveller and its first ecclesiastical historian, Benedict Biscop and Bede, beyond compare with any corresponding personages of any of the other kingdoms.

If these courses of lectures had not been interrupted, the lecturer had proposed to turn his attention to the quarter opposite to the north-east of England, that is, the south-

[1] *The Conversion of the Heptarchy*, and *Theodore and Wilfrith.*

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west. Here two names stood out. The one was that of the native Englishman who is said to have been the first Englishman to teach Latin in England, and who says of himself that he was the first Englishman to study the metres of Latin poetry, I mean of course Aldhelm, Abbat of Malmesbury and Bishop of Sherborne. The other was that of the great Englishman who went from Crediton while it was still a British place, and Christianized practically all Germany, meeting at last the fate to which no missionary to the Angles or Saxons or Jutes of this island ever was subjected so far as we know; I mean the martyr Archbishop of Mentz, the Devonshire Winfrid, the martyr Boniface. A course of lectures could well be woven round the story of each of these two marked men. Then a return to the history of Northumbria would have produced a course of lectures on the history of a man in some ways more marked than any of the others, the learned Alcuin, who was as a boy a pupil at my school, the Cathedral School of York, under the brother of the reigning king who was then its head master, an office to which Alcuin himself succeeded after it had been held for a time by another relative of the king. Beyond that

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period, say from 750 to 800, I should not have cared to go. A period of terrible gloom had set in. As in our earliest times the Church in England was bright and prosperous beyond the experience of any other nation; so in the times which followed, disasters scarce paralleled elsewhere came upon us. It is a question whether even the Saracens in lands further south wrought proportionally a deeper agony than the Danes wrought here.

It is to me an instructive coincidence, that while Aldhelm was to have been my next subject at St. Paul's, I find myself now in charge of those parts of Wiltshire in which by far the largest part of his life was spent. The Bishop of Bristol has charge of the actual place in which Aldhelm studied as a boy, taught as a man, ruled as an abbat, and lived through the whole of his long life except for four or five years; where now the great Norman Abbey Church of Malmesbury still stands, a charge as delightful in itself, and in its associations, as it is anxious by reason of the state of the fabric. It is a further coincidence that until the year 1836 the See of Bristol, though up to that date it did not include Malmesbury, yet did include, and had for 300 years included, the whole County of

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Dorset, with Aldhelm's own Abbey of Sherborne, eventually his bishop's seat and title, his home for the last four years of his life.

While Aldhelm thus spent the whole of his life in the kingdom of Wessex, excepting a sojourn at Canterbury and a visit to Rome, and Wessex therefore is the geographical area of our subject, we cannot altogether neglect Mercia. The boundaries of the two kingdoms were not very certain at any early time, and they appear to have varied not inconsiderably. The usual boundary line passed very near Malmesbury; at the present day Gloucestershire comes within three miles of that Wiltshire town, on the Shipton Moyne road. We shall see at a later stage how the danger of this proximity to another kingdom, often actively hostile, was guarded against by an agreement between the two nations on the wise suggestion of Aldhelm. It may be added that although Malmesbury was always, so far as we know, in Wessex, after its late conquest from the Britons by the West Saxons, yet the earliest recorded grants to Aldhelm's monastery are grants not from kings of Wessex but from princes and kings of Mercia. As telling in the opposite direction, it may be further added that the Castle of Bever-

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stone in Gloucestershire, near Malmesbury, appears to have been a residence of Godwin as Earl of Wessex. We shall see, later on, how directly Godwin and Harold intervened in the affairs of the Abbey of Malmesbury in their time.

The variation of boundary line between Wessex and Mercia has been renewed in the present generation by the County Councils. They have taken out of Wessex and placed in Mercia the four parishes of Kemble, Poole Keynes, Somerford Keynes, and Sharncote, and have thus increased the already abnormal disproportion in number of benefices between the Sees of Gloucester and Bristol.

The mention of Mercia may be supplemented by the fact that the See of Bristol includes parts of Mercia as well as parts of Wessex, and that one of the Gloucestershire parishes of the See, the prettily named Pulchra Ecclesia, Pucklechurch, where was a palace of the Anglo-Saxon kings in the great hall of which King Eadmund was murdered in 946, has to this day St. Aldhelm's well at the royal Barton.

The composite character of the See of Bristol is carried even further than this. It includes ninety thousand persons on the Somer-

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setshire side of the Avon. Moreover, Bristol is itself a county. Thus the See is made up of the County of the City of Bristol, and portions of the Counties of Gloucester, Somerset, and Wilts. It will readily be understood that a bishop of a newly-revived see, who has no Lord Lieutenant in conjunction with whom he can call a county meeting, and has portions of three counties and of two kingdoms under his charge, some of these portions still actively conscious of recent changes, has some difficulty in fostering a diocesan feeling.

The composite character of the See of Bristol has one important result of far-reaching character. When Henry VIII was creating the see—a creation specially continued in Queen Mary's time by the Pope in an *ex post facto* document, Mary and the consecrators of Holywell not having waited for any papal ratification—the king gave by charter to the Bishops of Bristol all the powers possessed by the bishops of the dioceses from which the several portions were taken. There is an idea in some quarters that the bishops of new foundations have less power in their cathedral churches than bishops of old foundations have; and there appears to be an

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idea that bishops of Henry VIII's foundations have less power than any. The opposite of this is the actual fact, so far as Bristol is concerned. By the charter of 1542, the cathedral church consists of the Bishop, Dean, and six [now four] Prebendaries. It is declared to be the cathedral church and episcopal seat of the Bishop. The Bishop has all jurisdiction, power, and authority, *ordinarial and episcopal*, within the cathedral church and the diocese, as amply as the Bishops of Sarum, Bath and Wells, Worcester, Gloucester, the four sees from which portions were taken, and as any English bishop can have. The Dean and Prebendaries are the Chapter. They are the Chapter of the Bishopric, annexed, incorporated, and united to the Bishop in the same form and manner as the Dean and Chapter of Sarum to the Bishop [in mediaeval times]. Their powers are except and save in all ways the said episcopal jurisdiction and authority over the cathedral church and the Dean and Chapter. The extracts from the Latin charter will be found in Appendix A.

The relation of the Statutes of the Cathedral Church to the Charter has been misunderstood, from the prevailing ignorance of the position

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of a Visitor. The Founder of a Corporation is the Visitor of the Corporation. The right descends to his heir for the time being. If such heir cannot be found, the Crown is the Visitor, acting through the Lord Chancellor, at least in the case of Colleges in the Universities, which are "private eleemosynary lay foundations." The Founder can assign his Visitatorial rights, and Henry VIII did so in the case of Bristol Cathedral. He gave, as Founder, its Statutes, two years after the Charter, and at the end of the Statutes he declared the Bishop to be always the Visitor to see that they were carried out. This is in addition to the wide powers over the Cathedral Church which the Charter gives. It has been ignorantly supposed that the Statutes define the powers of the Bishop in his own church. It is the Charter and the ancient custom of the land that does that.

The difficulty of creating a diocesan feeling is rendered greater by the long isolation of Bristol itself from the neighbouring counties. In the reign of Edward I the Town of Bristol complained to the king that it was pressed for levies both by the Sheriff of the County of Gloucester and by the Sheriff of the County of Somerset, in which two counties it lay: it

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petitioned to be made a County, independent of these two. The petition was granted; it became the County of the Town of Bristol; and the Crown appointed its Sheriffs as in the case of other counties. In the time of Edward III the Town found this method of appointment of Sheriff from among the townsfolk cumbersome, and it obtained from the Crown the power to elect its own Sheriff. A clause in the charter for the Bishopric raised the Town into a City, and the County of the Town into the "County of the City of Bristol." It is only by the Bishop's Charter that Bristol became and is a City. It is curious to note in these modern times the demarcation of feeling which has come from this geographical and organic isolation; and to go centuries further back than the time of Edward I, and note the marks which still remain of the old division between the kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex, and between the races of the Angles and the West Saxons. Homogeneity is the very last characteristic to be attributed to the revived See of Bristol. Generations of patient work and earnest workers will be needed before such attribution can be more than a dream of happy times to come.

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As to the period which these lectures will cover, it is sufficient here to say that Aldhelm died in the year 709, and as he is described by William of Malmesbury as at least a septuagenarian, we may safely place his birth as early as 639. Inasmuch as the King of Wessex, to whom Aldhelm was related, had been a pagan until his baptism in 634, when Christianity was for the first time preached to the West Saxons, it is certain that Aldhelm's parents were pagans at least down to a very few years before his birth. As regards the other of the two kingdoms with which we are to be concerned, Aldhelm was at least twelve years old when the teaching of Christianity was first admitted into the kingdom of Mercia, and at least sixteen when the first Christian king began to reign there. In the first twelve or sixteen years of Aldhelm's life, Malmesbury was still in the hands of the old inhabitants, being the northern fortress of the great kingdom of the Damnonian Britons. The forest of Selwood, which ran up to Cricklade, and formed for so long a time an impenetrable barrier to the advance westward of the West Saxons, was not pierced by them till they won the battles of Bradford and Pen[1] in 652

[1] Æt Peonnum. The scene of Eadmund's battle in

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and 658. It was only then that Malmesbury, a stronghold alike of British Christianity and British Sovereignty, fell into the hands of the West Saxons, who fortunately had by that time become Christians and did not break the continuity of Christian worship there.

We shall not break off abruptly with the year of Aldhelm's death. Malmesbury is a sacred charge to the diocese, and we must see something more of its history than such a limit would allow.

It is necessary for us to sketch concisely the ecclesiastical condition of England at the time when Aldhelm came to maturity.

When Archbishop Theodore reached England at the end of May in the year 669, at which time Aldhelm was probably nearly thirty years old, he found that the Italian Mission of seventy years before had left but small results and almost no machinery. He had almost a *tabula rasa* to work upon, and that, no doubt, was a main element in his success. Before his arrival, that is, between 597 and 669, twenty-eight bishops and archbishops had been consecrated to sees in the

1016 is Æt Peonnan wið Gillingaham. Probably the remarkably strong position of Penselwood is intended in both cases.

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territories occupied by the several sections of the English race. Of these twenty-eight, only twelve had been consecrated by bishops connected with the Roman Mission, namely, three to Canterbury, of whom one[1] was consecrated to that see before it was vacant, and therefore was of very doubtful position, and another[2] was consecrated by a bishop without a pall; four to Rochester; one to London, which was East Saxon, not Mercian, at the time; three to Dunwich; and one to York. Not one of these, you will see, was consecrated to any part of the territory included in the diocese of Bristol; no Mercian bishop and no West Saxon bishop derived consecration from Augustine. Nine of the remaining sixteen consecrations of the twenty-eight before Theodore's arrival were these: two to Canterbury, namely, Augustine by a Gallican prelate, Vergilius of Arles, and Theodore by Pope Vitalian; two to York, by French and British bishops; four to Lindisfarne, three by Finan and one by Irish bishops; one to London by Finan. Lastly, we have seven

Laurentius, consecrated to the Archbishopric by Augustine himself.

[2] Honorius, consecrated by Paulinus, who had no pall at the time. Honorius in turn consecrated without a pall.

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consecrations in which we are territorially interested: two to Dorchester, the Dorchester near Oxford, the original seat of the Wessex bishopric; one of the two by Asterius of Milan and the other by French bishops; one to Winchester, which had then become the seat of the Wessex bishopric, by French bishops; and four to Mercia, three by Finan and one by Irish bishops. Not one of these had any connection with the Italian Mission.

That is a sufficiently striking criticism of the success of the Italian Mission of Augustine. But it is more remarkable still that in 669, seventy-two years after the arrival of Augustine, Theodore found in all the English territories only three bishops with sees, East Saxon, East Anglian, and Northumbrian. Of these, the only one who had the Canterbury consecration was dying, Boniface of East Anglia. The East Saxon bishop was of French consecration, the Northumbrian of French and British. There was no bishop of Mercia, no bishop of Wessex. "Almost dead" is the verdict which the facts write across the page on which the history and results of the Italian Mission are recorded. Aldhelm was an important factor in the new and larger life of this Church.

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A summary of a different character will help us to set Aldhelm with some accuracy among his historical surroundings, and will enable us better to appreciate the earliness of the period in which our thoughts are to dwell. The first Christian King of Wessex, Cynegils, was taught, catechized and baptized, by Birinus, about 634, some five years before Aldhelm's birth. Birinus's see was placed at Dorchester, near the modern Oxford, and his church was dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. On the death of Cynegils, about 642–3, his son Cenwalch restored paganism when Aldhelm was a little child of four. The pagan Penda of Mercia expelled him. He was converted by the King of East Anglia, and restored. He built a church at Winchester about 648, dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. Birinus died in 650, when Aldhelm was eleven years of age. A prelate from Ireland succeeded, Agilbert. He left in 663–4, and for eight years or so, while Aldhelm grew from twenty-four to thirty-two years of age, there was no bishop in Wessex. Then Agilbert's nephew, Leutherius, was sent over and became bishop. His seat was still at Dorchester, and he ruled there from 671 to 676. It was he who raised

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Malmesbury to the dignity of an Abbey, and made Aldhelm the first Abbat.

It is necessary to say something here on the sources of our information about Aldhelm himself and his immediate concerns.

From a description of St. Aldhelm's shrine as completed by King Ethelwulf, the father of Alfred, William of Malmesbury argued in 1125 that there must have been at Malmesbury in Ethelwulf's time a record of the chief events of Aldhelm's life, which had perished in the ravages by the Danes. Of materials for his life existing in William's own time, William remarks that the account of him given by Bede about 730 is very meagre, while the life written by Faritius is not trustworthy. One of these criticisms, that on Bede, who was about forty years younger than Aldhelm, is just; as regards Faritius, William was not an unbiassed critic. We shall see shortly what it is that Bede tells us. Faritius wrote only a few years before William of Malmesbury, and we have his life of Aldhelm. Faritius was originally a physician of Lombard extraction, at Aretino in Tuscany. He came to England about the year 1100, became a monk at Malmesbury, and thence went to Abingdon as Abbat, where he greatly im-

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proved the position of that important monastery. William of Malmesbury, who is always human and always tries to be fair, thinks it may be as well that, though he criticizes Faritius, he should record in his pages some Latin verses in praise of the work which he accomplished at Abingdon, written by William's fellow-monk Peter. If anyone will honour them by reading them, he remarks in curiously modern phrase, he will see, William thinks, the fine skill of an excellent versifier. For the most part the verses scarcely deserve that praise, though they are better than many of Aldhelm's own composition; but in one place, where Peter breaks out into dactylic rhyming lines, there is a striking ring about his verse—

Addita praedia, pallia regia, munera, vestes,
Vascula ditia, picta tapetia, sunt mihi testes.
Fulgurat aurea per laquearia pompa decoris,
Crusta metallica, gemmea fabrica, plena stuporis.

This Faritius, because he had been a monk at Malmesbury, wrote a life of Aldhelm. William, as has been said, is critical about this life. Faritius, he remarks, was a foreigner, and therefore at a disadvantage for such work; he relied on himself for his facts—an awkward characteristic in a writer of history;

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he advanced no evidences for his statements. William determined to take a very different course in writing his own life of Aldhelm; he would give his evidence for each statement. But, curiously enough, he does not carry out his resolve by descending to particulars in his suggestions that Faritius wrote on insufficient evidence. Indeed his only correction of Faritius is in connection with the derivation of Aldhelm's name, which Faritius took to mean *Ald almus*, kindly old man, whereas Aldhelm himself, in a letter to a pupil, said that it was *Ald helm*, the old helmet. And after all that does not come to much, and there was something to be said for it. The life by Faritius covers thirty-three octavo pages, that by William, a hundred and ten. A short life published by Capgrave is a mere summary of the more interesting events of the life, compressed into four octavo pages. The author in this short space contrives to contradict a theory of mine with regard to the white marble altar which, as we shall see, Aldhelm brought from Italy, by inserting a statement that he brought it from Rome; as, I believe, he brought it from Lombardy.

Faritius on his part was not conscious of any want of proper equipment for his task.

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He tells us that he had examined carefully all the documents available, some in Latin, some in the barbarous tongue. Such are the terms in which he is pleased to describe the early form of our language. Of the latter documents some were exceedingly ancient, and he had them read to him by an interpreter. He collected the facts handed down by oral tradition from the time when a parchment roll was in existence which recorded the details of Aldhelm's life, a roll destroyed, he believed, by the Danes. Moreover, shortly after Aldhelm's death, the shrine containing his bones had been adorned with silver plates showing some of his principal deeds, and the tradition of this record was clear; the shrine had been greatly neglected and had almost perished, but a certain Praesul had caused it to be restored, and the renewed record was there still to be seen. He relied for confirmation of the traditions upon the fact that St. Dunstan and other bishops, who lived nearer Aldhelm's time, and had full means of knowing, accepted them and handed them on.

Notwithstanding all this, it is better to use the life by Faritius as a very interesting record, but not so carefully written as William's account is. The general verdict

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appears to be that we can pass Faritius by, and derive all that is really to be known of Aldhelm from William of Malmesbury. Among other records William had access to King Alfred's Manual, or Handboc, for he calls it by both names, the precious collection of passages and prayers and facts which the great king made for his own use; now lost, but surely some time or other to be found in some unsuspected place. To this manuscript William owed, as we shall see, the most picturesque fact in Aldhelm's life, and some of the highest praise of his genius.

This man William was the first systematic writer of English history, secular or ecclesiastical, after Bede. He was the father of Modern English History. To his two great books, the *Gesta Regum* and the *Gesta Pontificum*, and his supplementary book which he named *Modern History*, we owe at least very much of our knowledge of the deeds of Kings and Prelates, and of many interesting persons who were neither. He was probably born about the year 1090. He finished his *Modern History* with the year 1142, but he lived long enough to make a large number of detailed alterations. Probably the years 1120–1145 cover the fruitful period of his life as a writer.

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He was a monk in the monastery of Malmesbury; became precentor and librarian; and is said to have refused the great office of Abbat. He tells us that he had always been devoted to study; he had visited many of the most celebrated monasteries, and seen their libraries; he had collected many books. He was a voracious reader, and he digested all that he devoured. Every kind of subject that he could read about he studied. His writings are full of references to classical and post-classical authors, references made in the most simple and natural manner. He was complete master of his own knowledge, and never let himself be run away with by it. This is very unusual praise for a mediaeval writer, however early. He endeavoured to be scrupulously fair in writing of his own very difficult times. We have nothing to do with those times in this course of lectures, but it will tend to give us confidence in his guidance through the times of Aldhelm if we take note of what he said of his own times and his own purpose. "England," he says, in speaking of the gloomy prophetic utterance of Edward the Confessor on his death-bed, "England is become the residence of foreigners and the property of strangers: at the present

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time there is no English man who is either earl, bishop, or abbat; strangers all, they prey upon the riches and vitals of England: nor is there any hope of a termination to this misery." Then, a page or two later, he proceeds to deal with William I. "Normans," he says, "have praised him to excess: English have loaded him with undeserved reproach. The blood of both peoples runs in my veins, therefore I shall steer a middle course. Where I am certified of his good deeds, I shall openly proclaim them. His bad conduct I shall touch upon, but lightly and sparingly, yet not so as to conceal it." He then proceeds to pass a carefully balanced judgment on the two sons of the Conqueror who reigned and died in his time. He is clearly a man whom we can trust to be fair according to his lights. His own monastery did not honour his memory as he deserved. When Leland visited Malmesbury some four hundred years after his death, the monks could not show him William's tomb, and only two of them remembered having heard his name.

Most fortunately we have his own manuscript of the History of the Prelates, of which the life of Aldhelm forms one complete book, much the longest of the five books except the

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first. The manuscript is in the library of Magdalen College, Oxford. It is full of the author's erasures, corrections, insertions. This alone would convince us that it is in his own handwriting; but the fact is made certain by a MS. of Anselm's Disputations in the Lambeth Palace Library, certainly in the same handwriting, in which the writer says, *Scribit Willelmus monachus Malmesburiensis*, "written by William a monk of Malmesbury." One curious fact about this Magdalen College manuscript may be mentioned. In the deeds of the Prelates, in speaking of Anselm's attempts to stop simony and gross immorality, he erases fifteen lines, and over the space thus made vacant he writes: "I confess my imbecility, I will not fight with hope." But his manuscript had been copied before the erasure, and two of the copies then made are in existence with the erased words, which are indeed words of despair [1].

It is this William of Malmesbury who gives so very flattering an account of the Vale of Gloucester. Gloucester, he tells us, is supposed to take its name from Claudius

[1] The words erased are printed in a note on page 121 of the edition of William's *Gesta Pontificum* in the Rolls Series.

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Caesar, the original form having been Cairclau[1], the castle of Clau. In evidence of the very high regard in which the Britons in the Roman times held the late Emperor Claudius, he quotes Seneca as saying that the barbarous people in Britain worshipped him as God, and in his honour built a city. What Seneca actually said was[2], that in his time Claudius had a temple in Britain, where the barbarous people worshipped him and addressed prayer to him as God. From the city, whose name passed from the British Cair Clau to the later Glou Castra or Gloucester, the whole region, William tells us, takes its name of the Vale of Gloucester. The soil is rich in corn and fertile in fruit, thanks to nature alone in some parts, to skill of culture in others. If any one is disposed to be lazy, mere avarice will tempt him to the joys of labour, where labour is rewarded by a return of a hundredfold. You may see the public roads draped with apple-bearing trees, not laboriously grafted, but owing their profusion to the nature of the soil. The land of its own accord bursts into fruit, most of it superior to others in kind and flavour. Many of the apples keep

[1] Other MSS. spell this Kairclau and Caircloui.
[2] Ludus de morte Claudii Caesaris.

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good for a year, to serve their owners till the next year's crop is ready. The district is better for vines than other provinces of England. The vines are more abundant; they yield a larger crop; the flavour of the grape is more exhilarating. The wines made from them do not distress the palate by harsh acidity; indeed they hardly yield to French wines in pleasantness. The river Severn adds to the glory of the district. No river in the whole land is wider in its channel, more vehement in its current, more responsive to the art of the fisherman.

I may interrupt the course of William's remarks by reminding you that grapes were largely grown in England for the purpose of making wine, from the Norman Conquest onwards in diminishing extent through the Middle Ages. We continually find vineyards mentioned in mediaeval charters, and in districts which appear in these days hopelessly unsuitable for ripening grapes. A study of the mentions of vineyards in the Domesday Survey has led to the interesting discovery that the vineyards gathered round the principal demesnes of the chief of the Norman nobles; that some had been planted almost immediately after the allotment of the Saxon

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estates to the Norman conquerors, and were already in full bearing; while others had been planted later, and had not yet come into profit.

The remark about Norman noblemen introducing the cultivation of the grape must not be taken to mean that the vine was not cultivated in England before the Conquest. We have clear evidence to the contrary, and that at Malmesbury itself. William tells us that in the Anglo-Saxon times a Greek monk settled at Malmesbury and created the vineyard on the hill to the north of the Abbey, which continued there for many years. They did not know whence this monk Constantine came: but when he found himself dying he drew out of a receptacle a pallium, and put it on as best he could in his dying state, and died in it; whence they supposed that he had been an archbishop. When his grave had to be disturbed many years after, to make room for other bodies, his bones were found to be abnormally white and to have a pleasant odour. This confirmed their conviction that Constantine was of no plebeian sanctity.

It is a matter of notoriety that in our own generation the cultivation of the grape for the purpose of making wine has been renewed,

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at no great distance from the region which William praised so much in this respect, and with a success at least as great as that which he recorded[1].

Our author goes on to describe the bore in the Severn. There is every day a raging of the waters, whether to call it a *vorago* or a *vertigo* of the waves he does not know. It tears up the sands from the very bottom of the channel, it collects itself into a great heap, it comes on with a rush, but it does not go beyond the bridge. Sometimes it even climbs the banks, and having made a wide circuit of the land returns to its course. Unhappy the vessel that it strikes on the side. Sailors who are on the alert, when they see this Higra, as the English call it, coming, turn their vessel to meet it, and cutting it straight through escape its violence.

In Yorkshire, I may add, where a tidal wave rushes up the Ouse from the Humber as far as Naburn ferry, it is still called the *egre* or *agre*, as in William's time the bore of the Severn was. You may hear a weird cry passed along the banks of the Yorkshire river for miles, as the great crest of water

[1] For further information on this subject, see Appendix B, p. 356.

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comes mantling on, "*Ware agre! Ware agre!*"

Bristol itself is described by William in one pregnant sentence, which shows us how competent our author was to go to the root of the matter in describing a place. In the same valley, he says, is a very celebrated town (or a town greatly resorted to), Bristow by name. He uses the correct term *town*, for Bristol was not erected into a *city* till four centuries later, and then only because it became possessed of a bishop. Here, he says, is a harbour, a receptacle for ships coming from Ireland and Norway and other lands across the seas. Thus a district so fortunate in its natural wealth enjoys also its share of foreign riches. We might almost take that as the motto for our great work to be commenced in three weeks' time[1].

We shall be glad to have as our guide a man who formed so just an idea of our advantages and value. He had a special interest in Gloucestershire, for Robert, Earl of Gloucester, was his patron, the natural son of Henry I, a man of great talents and learning, called the Maecenas of his age. To him William dedicated his *Deeds of the Kings*

[1] The new Avonmouth Docks.

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and his *Modern History*. As regards the commerce of Bristol in those times, to which he makes complimentary reference, we must charitably suppose that our author was not acquainted with its character[1].

Among sources of information I have not mentioned the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. That most valuable record of the early times of the English in England was not commenced till long after Aldhelm's time: we probably or certainly owe its inception to King Alfred. It is very meagre in the earlier years, but every word of it is of importance. There can be no doubt that the compiler in Alfred's time had access to records of some brief character which have long been lost. For our present purpose, which is chiefly ecclesiastical, the Chronicle draws upon Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English race, compiled by Bede in the years immediately following the death of Aldhelm, from the most trustworthy records he could obtain from the several kingdoms of the Heptarchy.

I shall perhaps best give an idea of the small extent of the information which we find in the Chronicle, and at the same time of its fundamental value, if I quote the whole

[1] Bristol was a mart for slaves.

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of its remarks in connection with Aldhelm. They fall under the year 709, and they form close upon half of the whole information given under that year. It will be useful to add that the entry for this year 709, short as it is, is, with four exceptions, the longest entry in the principal manuscript of the Chronicle for the first 715 years of the Christian era. The four exceptions are almost wholly ecclesiastical. One is the famous entry under the year 565, the year of the accession of Ethelbert of Kent, in which the Chronicle tells of the conversion of the Kentish people of his time, and, curiously enough, of the work of Columba and Ninian, to whom it gives four times as much space as to Ethelbert's conversion. The second is under the year 616, the year of Ethelbert's death. An entry of the same length as the one in question, under the year 627, tells of the conversion of Edwin of Northumbria. The next, for the year 634, tells of the first preaching of Christianity to the West Saxons by Birinus. The entry for 709 is as follows:—

"In this year Bishop Aldhelm died. He was bishop west of Selwood; and in the early days of Daniel, the land of the West Saxons was divided into two bishop-shires, and pre-

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viously it was one: one Daniel held, the other Aldhelm. After Aldhelm, Forthere succeeded to it."

That is all that the Chronicle tells us of Aldhelm. The rest of the entry for 709 is thus:—

"And King Ceolred succeeded to the kingdom of the Mercians; and Cenred went to Rome and Offa with him" [this was Offa of the East Saxons, not of Mercia]. "And Cenred was there till his life's end. And in the same year Bishop Wilfrith died at Oundle, and his body was conveyed to Ripon; he was bishop forty-five winters; whom King Ecgfrith had formerly driven to Rome."

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CHAPTER II

Malmesbury, its position and early history. Leland's account.—The West Saxon Conquest.—Suggested antecedents of Maildubh.—Augustine's visit to the neighbourhood. — Aldhelm's contemporaries. — Connection with Ireland.—English Art, Literature, and Architecture, in Aldhelm's time.—Suggested origin of Anglian Art.

IF it was necessary to give some information about William of Malmesbury, as being the author from whom we learn most of what we know of Aldhelm, it is equally necessary to give some account of Malmesbury itself, the common home of Aldhelm and William.

Few, if any, of the archaeological and ecclesiastical interests of England are greater than those which gather in the earliest times around Malmesbury. The consideration of those interests will take us into that dim period of the past when the Christian Briton was still holding out in some prominent fastnesses against the pagan Saxon and Angle; when the infant foreign Church and the old native Church were agreeing to differ, while the pagan Saxons remained rooted in their idolatry.

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The site of Malmesbury is remarkable by its position and by its history. You seldom see in any non-mountainous part a place so well marked out by nature as Malmesbury is for a place of strength. The streets and houses to a considerable extent obscure the fact; but it is still quite easy to see what Malmesbury must have been in the time of bows and arrows and javelins. And if this is so now, when the encircling streams have dwindled down to modest proportions, and are fairly confined within their rich grassy banks, it must have been much more markedly true when those two rivers were great spreading swamps and morasses, choked with the débris of impenetrable forests, leaving the promontory of Malmesbury to stand out with its own natural abruptness from an impassable marsh, with approach only at one narrow neck flanked by precipitous sides. The British fortress on the heights of Malmesbury was one of their strongest places of defence; and history seems to show that no other place held out in full force against the surrounding Saxons as this did. No other British place remained undisturbed, with its complete British life and work, right out among the Saxons geographically, right on

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into Saxon history, as Malmesbury did. The tradition is that this strong place was a residence of the Kings of Damnonia before the advent of the Saxons. It was well fitted to be the northern fortress of that powerful kingdom, guarding the great forest which must have been so useful as the protection of their frontier.

John Leland, whom Henry VIII appointed in 1533 his Library Keeper and Antiquary, with a commission to visit and peruse the libraries of all cathedrals, abbeys, colleges, and other places where records and the secrets of antiquity were deposited, came of course to Malmesbury, as one among the famous libraries and places of records. He saw a manuscript collection on the Antiquities of Malmesbury, part of which he transcribed. It gives Bladow, or Bladon, as the British name of the castle, Ingelborne as the Saxon name; its builder was a British king named Dunwallo Malmutius[1]. At the time when Aldhelm's early connection with it began,

[1] The name Malmesbury has been derived from the name of this personage. The British pronunciation of Malmut would approximate to Malmeet, and Malmeetsbury would soon soften into Malmisbury; so it was argued, we must suppose.

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the dwellings other than the castle had been completely destroyed, and the people, both pagans and Christians, lived at a royal abode near, called Kairdurberg, and by the Saxons Brohamberg, in later times Brokenberg. This tradition is in accordance with the earliest documents.

In the British times, while the British town on and about the hill was still flourishing, certain nuns, under the obedience of the Abbat Dinooth [Dunawd] who ruled over many in the monastic life in many parts, had a settlement near Ingelborne, in a little town or village called Ilanberg, by the Saxons Burchton. Dinooth is the name given by Bede to the British hermit whom the Christian Britons consulted as to their course of action, before their second interview with Augustine; and one of the same name was Abbat of Bangor. Whether we are to see any identity of person as well as of name, would be a very interesting subject for consideration.

We need not on this occasion enter upon a discussion of what are called Welsh traditions. It is a confusing phrase, for it tends to make us suppose that the traditions are Welsh and not British. Our thoughts to-day are turned to a time when the Welsh, as we

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now call them, occupied the whole of the south-west of England as well as the central west, now called Wales, and occupied also the north-west. The West Saxons had not penetrated the barrier which the great forest, Selwood, presented to their further progress westward. Malmesbury was near the northern point of that great forest, which ran up to the head-waters of the Thames at Cricklade. Roughly speaking, the Britons were still in possession of the land from some miles east of Malmesbury right through to St. David's, and from Cricklade to the Land's End. It was the impenetrable wedge of forest territory which forced the Saxons in their progress up the Thames to make a detour, leaving the Britons at Malmesbury undisturbed. They turned south-west again when they got round the point of the forest, and won the battle of Deorham (Dyrham) in 577. That battle gave them Cirencester and Bath and Gloucester, and thus made more marked than ever the wedge of forest territory in which Malmesbury stood, still a British hold.

Thirteen or fourteen years after that battle a very important alliance was made between the Britons and one branch of the West Saxons, those, namely, who had occupied

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Gloucestershire. They made an alliance against the chief king of the West Saxons; marched upon him together down the Ermine Street, a few miles east of Malmesbury, just outside the eastern boundary of the Britons; found him in North Wilts at Wanborough; and finally defeated him there. The battle of Wanborough made the Saxons of Gloucestershire independent of the West Saxon kingdom; and it cemented a friendship between the Gloucestershire Saxons, called as we well know the Hwiccas, and the Britons of the Malmesbury regions. So far are ordinary historians from realizing the true state of things, that they bring the Britons all the way from the parts we now call Wales to fight the battle of the Hwiccas in North Wilts, their connection with which was very remote. To our Malmesbury Britons the fight was a local fight of vital importance.

The alliance appears to have led to an undisturbed possession by the Britons here. This is very clearly shown by one historical fact. About 637, that is, nearly fifty years after the battle of Wanborough, and only a year or two before Aldhelm's birth, long before any Saxon in the neighbourhood was a Christian, an Irish Christian teacher,

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Maildubh, wearied with the dissensions of his countrymen and desiring a perfectly peaceable place for the hermit life, found at Malmesbury a suitable asylum. There was a sufficient population for his teaching purposes. They were Britons, and Christians. The pagan Saxons were not there. He was free from the quarrels of the Christian Scots. From ravages of marauders, which had driven him out of one abode and another, the nature of the place was a safeguard. Here, then, he settled; gathered companions of like mind; and built a small basilica which still existed in the time of William of Malmesbury, 1140, and was called St. Michael's[1]. Maildubh's dwelling-place is understood to have been in Burnvale, nestling under the precipitous side of the narrow neck by which the fortress was approached. If you are approaching the abbey church from the west, and look down to the right of the road at the narrowest part, when you are getting near the church, you will see where Maildubh lived. His basilica

[1] Leland read in an old chronicle at Malmesbury, *de prima origine Maeldulphesbyriensis monasterii*, that 'Maildulph was so beset in his parts of Scotia [Ireland] by thieves and robbers that he fled into England and came to the castle of Bladon.'

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was built, no doubt, *more Scottorum*, as Bede expresses it, that is, in the Irish fashion, of timber. The Britons of Somerset built of wattle and clay; a large amount of very careful and abiding work of this interesting character was uncovered a few years ago[1] near Glastonbury, where, as we know, a chapel constructed of these materials remained till the Norman Conquest. British basket-work was much valued in imperial Rome.

It is only natural to make some effort to connect Maildubh, and his flight from Ireland and to Malmesbury, with places and events in Ireland, and with some link, traditional or otherwise, which inclined him towards the British district whose chief northern stronghold became his resting-place. The attempt at first seems hopeless; but perseverance meets with some unexpected crumbs of encouragement.

The younger St. Carthach, who was a Munster man, being on a visit to a saint near Tullamore, in the ancient Meath, was advised by the saint to found a monastery near him. This was probably not earlier than the year 588, when Carthach was quite young. The great schools of learning at Durrow, Clon-

[1] See *The Church in these islands before Augustine*, pp. 46–8.

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macnois, Clonfert, and Clonard, were all in the neighbourhood, and Durrow especially was near. Carthach was not deterred by this fact, though—or perhaps because—he was a stranger, from another Irish land. He created, and for nearly forty years he ruled, the great monastic school of Rahan. Under his management it grew to such success that a very early life of the saint records the presence in his time of more than eight hundred monks, besides the boys and servants; while the church of the monastery, which he built, was so important a fabric that its ruins are still to be seen.

About the years 632–634, the jealousy of the native clerics came to a head, and they determined to expel Carthach and his monks. They stirred up the secular ruler of the territory, Blathmac, to drive the strangers away. Carthach was now an old man, probably over seventy, and he refused to go, unless force was used. Blathmac himself took him by the hand and led him out of his well-loved home. It was a marked event, appearing as such not in the Ulster Annals only, but also in the Chronicle of the Scots. Rahan being near the southern border of Meath, Carthach very soon found himself

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clear of that inhospitable land, and once more in his native Munster. He and his monks moved southwards, by stages which can be clearly traced, till at length they reached the dominion of the Desii of Waterford, whose prince gave to Carthach a territory in which to found another school. They began to build, and modestly called their new home Lios-beg, 'a small habitation'; but a prophetic virgin bade them call it Lios-mor, 'a great habitation,' and Lismore it became, one of the most famous and most frequented of the many schools of learning and of saints which gave—and deservedly gave—to Ireland the name of *Insula sanctorum et doctorum*.

Now all the phrases employed to describe the causes of Maildubh's departure from Ireland suit the suggestion which I venture to make, that Maildubh was one of Carthach's learned monks, and was so much upset by the jealousy of the Irish of one territory against the Irish of another territory, that he determined to make an end of such experiences and seek a place of quiet. Carthach's first vice-abbat at Rahan had been Constantine, a British king, and thus there was certainly knowledge of British places among the older members of the expelled body of monks.

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Constantine may well have been a king of the south-western Britons, in which case Malmesbury was his northern fortress[1]. Maildubh had only to drop down the Blackwater from Lismore to Youghall, and thence, or from Waterford, his course to Bristol was clear. From Avonmouth the Roman road led to Bath, and thence to Malmesbury by the Fosseway through the safe recesses of Selwood. The whole thing seems to fit together quite as well as many stories of history do. The fact that the first bishop of the West Saxons was succeeded in 650 by a prelate who had studied in Ireland, may have some connection with these events.

The principal stronghold of the Britons continued undisturbed for some years more, and Maildubh's teaching progressed. It was not the Hwiccas who disturbed them when at last their time came. The Hwiccas had before that time become Mercian. It was the West Saxons proper, the people of East Wiltshire and Hampshire, who broke through the forest wedge. They did not attack

[1] Or he may have been a lesser king, such as those of the Romano-British districts, and the battle of Dyrham may have expelled him from his British home. It is a familiar fact that Constantine was a royal name among the Britons at that period.

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Malmesbury itself, but cut the forest lower down, and so isolated it. The battle of Bradford on Avon in 652 cut off this northern part of Selwood; and the battle of Pen six years later, in 658, opened the way through to the occupation of Somerset. There was clearly no ravaging of these Malmesbury parts, such as marked the Saxon progress, for instance, at Glastonbury. The Irish teacher went steadily on, and the conquering king, he and his all now Christian, sent his own relative, Aldhelm, to learn of him. Aldhelm, as you know, succeeded Maildubh in unbroken order. He greatly enlarged the school, and built, in addition to the basilica, a great church, so excellent that even the Norman builders spared it after the Norman Conquest, and it only gave way to the present church in the middle of the twelfth century. Of how much importance Malmesbury was held to be in the later Saxon times you may form some idea from another historical fact, of which more will be said later on. When Hermann, the Bishop of Sherborne and also of Ramsbury, desired to unite the Wilts and Dorset sees in one, he selected Malmesbury as the site for the joint bishop-stool. Edward the Confessor approved; but Godwine and

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his sons opposed the scheme, and Hermann took Old Sarum as the second-best place. We are rather proud of that in North Wilts.

These considerations justify in my opinion the contention that nowhere in England have we so unbroken a connection between the British and the Saxon Church and life and teaching as at Malmesbury; while the presence and the influence of the Irish teacher, continuing to hold his office under the new Saxon régime, adds an element of exceeding interest, probably unique in Saxon history, though a parallel may be found among the Angles.

Malmesbury played an important part, as I believe, in a very striking episode of the early Christian history of the English.

When Augustine, at Canterbury, turned his thoughts westward, about the year 600, it was only some two or three and twenty years after the battle of Deorham, and eight or nine after the battle of Wanborough; it was more than fifty years before the breaking up of the Selwood Britons. He was in search of a place at which he could meet a representative body of members of the British Church. Where would his glance rest geographically? Would he desire to meet the most distant Britons, at the most distant spot in the

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possession of the Saxons which the Britons could visit in safety; or would he look for the nearest Britons and the nearest place? Even in these days of express trains we should not hesitate about the reply. When we consider the labours and dangers of journeys then, and the large amount of time which they cost, it is quite inconceivable that he would pass by the nearest Britons, those in immediate contact with the Saxons in Wiltshire along a very extended frontier, and push on a long way further to a very remote branch of the British race. Bede settles the matter for us. By the help of the King of Kent, who had a sort of over-lordship of the West Saxons, Augustine set out for an interview with the people of "the nearest province of the Britons." This was certainly not the inhabitants of modern Wales. It was certainly the people of the nearest parts of Damnonia, that is, of the British province which originally had extended from Malmesbury to Cornwall; in Aldhelm's time it meant Devon and Cornwall. As a matter of geography it cannot be disputed that the British inhabitants of that part of Selwood which lay north of Frome, up as far as Cricklade, were to Augustine "the nearest province of the Britons." There

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are two local traditions which point clearly enough in the same direction. The one places Augustine's interview with the Britons on a hill near Box; the other takes him, not for this purpose but no doubt on the occasion of this visit, to Cerne in Dorsetshire.

The Britons were of course bitterly hostile to the pagan West Saxons, and a place must be found for the interview to which both Britons and Augustine's Saxon party could safely go. Ethelbert's over-lordship made it safe for Augustine to go to any West Saxon territory, and the Britons' recent and successful alliance with the Hwiccas made it safe for the Britons to visit any suitable place in Hwiccian territory. There you have all the conditions of the problem stated. You only have to turn upon it the further question, what about the roads? The answer settles the whole thing. The Ermine Street stared Augustine in the face. He went along it till he crossed from West Saxon territory to Hwiccian territory at the bridge or ford of Cricklade. There, on ground safe to him and his escort as being Saxon soil, and safe to the Britons as being in the land of the friendly Hwiccas, he met his fellow Christians. They no doubt had collected at Malmesbury, and emerged from

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their forest by ways known to themselves on to the open ground held by their Hwiccian allies. This is really the only spot in the world which fulfils all the conditions of the problem, without any forced interpretation or any departure from common-sense considerations.

We have got into the way of supposing that "Britons," in the time of which we are speaking, must of course mean what we now call Welsh, that is, the Britons in Wales. It is a very unhistorical supposition. When Aldhelm, a hundred years after Augustine's interview, addressed the Britons, he addressed the Britons of the south-west of our modern England, the very Britons who still occupied considerable parts of that "nearest province of the Britons," whose ecclesiastics Augustine invited to a conference. It was probably not till the first of Augustine's two conferences had taken place that the Britons of the further or west-central province were called into council by the Britons of the south-west. The Welsh Britons are not referred to in connection with the first of the two conferences, and the reference to them in connection with the second conference seems to me to suggest that they were only then called in. The Britons at the first conference pleaded that

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they must not come to terms with Augustine without the special licence and consent of their people, and they begged for a second conference at which more might be present. Accordingly, there came seven British bishops and a large number of most learned men, chiefly from that very noble monastery called by the English Bancornaburgh, Bangor in Flintshire. My impression is clearly that these had not been present on the former occasion, and that the great point of the second conference was that the Britons of the south-west called in the help and counsel of the Britons of the west, whom we call the Welsh. This is emphasized by the fact that this new body did not know what manner of man Augustine was, and the advice given to them was that they should watch him, to see if he was haughty to them; whereas it is certain that those who were present at the first interview had taken his measure and formed an estimate of his character.

I am not at all anxious to tie down the place of the conference to any precise spot. It took place at "Augustine's Oak," Bede tells us, a clear indication that it was an open-air conference, and not at what we should call a town or village: it was a place without

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a previous name, just as we should have expected under the conditions.

At Down Ampney, two miles from Cricklade, just on the Hwiccian side of the boundary, there is a farm called the Oak Farm. It is marked on the Ordnance Map as *The Oak*. Lord St. Germans informs me that it bears that name in his papers as far as they go back, but that is not very far; it was Hungerford property in earlier times. A great oak, from which it is supposed to have taken its name, was cut down by the steward in the time of the grandfather of the present owner, whom the destruction of the ancient tree greatly annoyed. Mr. Martin Gibbs, who gave me the first information I received about the Oak Farm, has found the roots of the old tree in the stack-yard. It is worthy of mention that oaks refuse to flourish in that immediate neighbourhood, so that the oak gave its name to the farm because it was a very unusual tree, not only because it was a very large one. The same may have been true of "Augustine's Oak"; indeed when one comes to think it out, it seems the more likely reason for the name. A fine oak in a country void of oaks is a much more marked thing than one oak among very many.

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It is an interesting fact that only two fields off the old oak of the Oak Farm there was a spring of water famous for its property of healing diseases of the eyes; there may well be some connection between this traditional efficacy and the story related by Bede that Augustine gave sight to a blind man at the first conference, in proof of his mission and power. The spring itself is said to have long been dry, owing to drainage operations fifty years ago, but the old people can still point it out; they call it the "lertle well," and the field the "lertle well nook"; and they still send for water from the neighbouring brooklet if their eyes are bad. My early familiarity with Yorkshire dialect suggests that "lertle" means "little." But the derivation of the word "little" comes through that pronunciation "lertle," as the Yorkshire language shows, and as our philologists know. The proper force of the word is mean, base, deceitful. It is a very curious thing if a connection can be even suggested between the name "the lertle well" and the meaning "the well of deceit." It was a Saxon on whom Augustine performed the miracle: years ago I suggested that the modern Welshman would demand that the experiment be tried upon a Welshman. With

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a casual Saxon, claiming to be blind; a well, claiming—perhaps quite truly—to cure affections of the eyes; wondering Britons, without the sense to pick their blind man for themselves; we have all the elements which would in the opinion of the pagan Hwiccian or West Saxon inhabitants of the district, who knew all about it, create the title "the well of deceit." This does not at all suggest Augustine's consciousness of the trick played upon the Britons.

We may now sketch in briefest outline the life of Aldhelm.

Aldhelm was born, as we have seen, not later than 639. His father was Kenten, of the royal family of Wessex. Kenten is said in one account to have been brother of King Ina; but the dates make that impossible, for Ina reigned from 685 to 726, and the true account is that Aldhelm was a cousin of the king, not nearer than second cousin or first cousin once removed. Even so, it adds an interest to his interesting history that he was so nearly related to the royal ancestors of our own sovereign, who descends from Ina's brother Ingild, Ecgbert's great-great-grandfather.

When Aldhelm was twelve and sixteen years of age, two great victories of the West

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Saxons over the Britons of Somerset, one in 652 at Bradford on Avon, and the other in 658 at Pen on the Parrett, opened a way through the Selwood, or Great Forest, and isolated its northern parts. In this way Malmesbury became accessible to the West Saxons. Aldhelm was a very studious boy, and Malmesbury, as we have seen, was a place of study under an Irish teacher, Maildubh, who a good many years before had retired from his own country because of its dissensions, and had found a quiet place for study and devotion at the great northern fortress of the British kingdom of the south-west. The boy Aldhelm was sent to study under him, and there he remained till he was nearly thirty years of age.

The African Abbat Hadrian, who preceded his companion the Greek Archbishop Theodore to England, was put in charge of the school or university which they established at Canterbury, where Theodore, as well as Hadrian, delivered courses of lectures. The Northumbrian Benedict Biscop had taught the school for two years, till Theodore and Hadrian were ready to undertake the work. To this school or university—using that word in the sense of a place where all of such know-

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ledge as was then available could be acquired, not in its proper sense, as in the case of Cambridge and Oxford, of a corporate community for teaching knowledge—Aldhelm repaired for the completion of his studies. Ill health compelled him to leave Canterbury and return to Malmesbury, probably about the year 672, when he was about thirty-two years of age. Here he succeeded his Irish teacher Maildubh as master of the school of students and religious. The school became of so much importance that the Bishop of Wessex, Leutherius, erected it into an abbey, and made Aldhelm the first abbat.

In the Abbey of Malmesbury Aldhelm ruled and taught as abbat and master from 675 to 705. In that latter year he was made Bishop of the new see of Sherborne. With the bishopric he continued, against his will, to hold the abbacy of Malmesbury, and also the abbacies of the monasteries which he had created at Frome and Bradford on Avon. In the year 709, four years after he became bishop, he died at Doulting in Somerset, being not less than seventy years of age, possibly a little more than seventy. He was carried to Malmesbury with much pomp and buried there.

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That is the baldest possible outline of his life. Each one of the points mentioned can be made the nucleus of a collection of information, which, besides its great local interest to ourselves, is not only very interesting in itself to all who love the records of the early times of the English race, but is also useful, and in some of its parts necessary, for all who wish to know something of the development of the successive stages of the history of the English Church.

We saw something in the previous chapter of the ecclesiastical condition of England at the time when Aldhelm grew to be a man. It may be well to say a little more in that direction, in order that we may not isolate Aldhelm and regard him apart from his context, but may be conscious of the setting in which he did his work.

His abbacy and bishopric covered the years from 675 to 709. Theodore, the Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, of Tarsus in Cilicia, ruled from 668 to 690, and Brihtwald from 693 to long after Aldhelm's death. St. Erkenwald was Bishop of London from 675 to 693. The restless Wilfrith was Bishop of Northumbria 664 to 678; became Bishop of Hexham in 705, in which year Aldhelm became

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Bishop of Sherborne; and died in the same year as Aldhelm, 709. St. Cuthbert was Bishop of Lindisfarne 685 to 687.

In Aldhelm's kingdom of Wessex, the contemporary kings were remarkable men, Cynegils 611 to 643, Cenwalh 643 to 672, Centwine 676 to 685, Ceadwal 685 to 688, and Ina 688 to 726. The same may be said of Mercia; Wulfhere 659 to 675, Ethelred 675 to 704, Coenred 704 to 709; and of Northumbria, Oswy 642 to 671, Ecgfrith 670 to 685, Aldfrith 685 to 705.

Inasmuch as the connection between England and Ireland, and the frequent resort of English students to teachers resident in Ireland, is a marked feature in Aldhelm's writings, it may be added here that Ecgbert of Northumbria, whose long residence in Ireland as a student and as a teacher formed a very strong link in this remarkable connection, was born in the same year with Aldhelm, and went to Ireland in his youth, several years before Aldhelm went to Canterbury and met Irish students there. To Ecgbert was due the missionary spirit which so markedly characterized the early Church of the English. The Yorkshire Willebrord went to study with him in 678, and caught from him the fire which burned

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in him as the Apostle of the Frisians and Missionary Archbishop of Utrecht. Adamnan, who in another line so closely connected England with Ireland, was fifteen years older than Aldhelm, became ninth Abbat of Iona in 679, and died in 704.

In the regions of Art and Literature, Aldhelm's adult life covered a period of remarkable creation and development. The earliest piece of English literature in existence, in its original form, dates from five years before his appointment as abbat. It is the inscription in Anglian runes on the shaft of the great cross at Bewcastle [1] in Cumberland, which sets forth the purpose of the erection of the "slender token of victory"—"in memory of Alcfrith, son of Oswy," erected "in the first year of Ecgfrith, king of this realm," i.e. 670. This wonderful memorial not only gives us our earliest piece of English literature; it gives us also the first example of Anglian art, and an astonishing example it is, with classical foliage, Anglian interlacements in perfection, and figures in bold relief on a sunk field of the king and his hawk, the Baptist, and our Lord, the last being a figure of such dignity

[1] See my *Conversion of the Heptarchy,* frontispiece and pp. 189-213.

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as cannot now be surpassed. This great cross, originally 17 feet high, is 250 years earlier than the first dated "high cross" in Ireland. A second astonishing example of the development of English art and literature in Aldhelm's time is afforded by the great cross at Ruthwell[1] in Dumfriesshire, 17 feet 6 inches high, with beautifully flowing foliage set free by Anglian skill from the classic stiffness of the foliage panels at Bewcastle; with many panels of figures in bold relief on a sunk field, showing scenes from the New Testament and from early Church History, the subjects being set forth in Latin letters which form a very museum of palaeography, cut large and deep on the horizontal and vertical frames of the panels; and with several stanzas of the old Anglian poem of the Dream of the Holy Rood, cut in Anglian runes equally deep and large on the frames of the long panels with vines and birds. This, on dynastic and racial considerations, must be dated about 680. All of Caedmon's sacred songs were sung while Aldhelm was Abbat of Malmesbury.

The use of the runic alphabet was practically confined to Northumbria. One word in

[1] For details, see my *Theodore and Wilfrith*, pp. 235-254, and figures 13, 14, 15.

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runes has been found at Dover and one at Sandwich. The pre-Norman shafts of crosses found in Wessex (see pages 149–180) are with one exception without inscription, and in that one case the letters are Roman capitals. Dr. Giles prints among the works of Aldhelm a letter from an anonymous person to an anonymous sister. At the end of this letter, *à propos* of nothing, the writer gives the names of the characters of the Runic Futhorc, a name formed from the names of the letters as we speak of an Alphabet or Abecedarium. But the letter in question bears internal proof of being the work of Aldhelm's correspondent Ethelwald, and we have no reason to assert that Aldhelm was acquainted with the Runic characters.

In metal we have St. Cuthbert's pectoral cross[1] and portable altar[2]. Of actual writing and drawing and painting we have the book which yields to none in perfection and taste and skill, the Lindisfarne Gospels[3], dating, as is now allowed, before the Book of Kells, and quite free from the strangenesses and inappropriatenesses which mar that highest example

[1] *Theodore and Wilfrith*, p. 161.
[2] *Theodore and Wilfrith*, frontispiece.
[3] In the British Museum.

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of Irish art. We have also still in existence, resting in an iron safe in the Laurenziana at Florence, the immense manuscript codex, so large that two men carry it on a stretcher when it is brought out for the study of some highly privileged person, which is merely one of a number of like codices in the Library of Wearmouth in Aldhelm's time. They were brought there by Aldhelm's contemporary Benedict Biscop, and we shall see how narrowly we in these southern parts missed the possession of these and many other treasures. This particular manuscript, the Codex Amiatinus, owes its existence to the fact that Aldhelm's contemporary Ceolfrid carried it away with him as a present to the Pope when he resigned the abbacy of Wearmouth and set off for a visit to Rome, which he did not live to accomplish [1].

In Church architecture, very great strides were made in Aldhelm's time. It is sufficient to say that masons were introduced by Benedict Biscop and Wilfrith from Gaul, and not only the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow were built, with their four churches,

[1] For details of this codex, and of its story after Ceolfrid's death, see *Lessons from Early English Church History*, pp. 72–5.

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but the great basilicas of Ripon and Hexham were raised, excelling in size and splendour all churches north of the Alps. These basilicas were finished two or three years after Aldhelm was made abbat, and we cannot doubt that he took pattern from them in the work which we shall have to describe. The "Gaul" from which the masons were brought was, in my judgement, Cisalpine Gaul, and the masons were in that case Lombards. Some of the great difficulties which beset the question of the origin of our beautiful Anglian art of the seventh and eighth centuries are reduced to less formidable dimensions, and some disappear, if we suppose that Benedict and Wilfrith found masons who had been trained in Greek art, not in the ruder art of Italy. One or two of the most perfect specimens of surface decoration in the Museum at Brescia are worthy of being set side by side with our own most beautiful examples of those very early times. Higher praise than that cannot be given. To say that we got it from Ireland is to disregard the facts.

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CHAPTER III

William of Malmesbury's scheme for his work.—Aldhelm's race; spelling and meaning of his name; parentage; education.—Origin of the name Malmesbury.—The Benedictine Rule.—Aldhelm's study at Canterbury; learning; his skill in versification.—Recognized as a master of style; the Irish Artwil and Cellanus.—His personal influence with friends and pupils.—Wilfrith in Wessex.—Letter to the clergy of Wilfrith, and to Ethelwald a student.

WILLIAM of Malmesbury sets out the scheme of his work in a clear and business-like manner. In following him through his story of Aldhelm's life, we shall keep as near as we can to his quaint phraseology, giving a translation rather than a version of his account. That course enables us more fully to fall into the spirit of the old times with which we deal. It enables us to realize the history of the past as composed of persons rather than of things.

This is his scheme. First, the origin and attainments of the most holy Aldhelm; secondly, the religious houses which he established and endowed; thirdly, a few miracles which in his lifetime he wrought;

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fourthly, the history of the Abbey of Malmesbury from Aldhelm's time to William's; a history, he tells us, which showed many shipwrecks of the liberty of their church, but showed also how, by the protection of the Saint, their church had come safe out of the most threatening storms. His own inadequacy for the work William felt; but he trusted that by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who had already filled his sails, he would safely traverse the vast sea that lay before him. He proposes to give direct evidence of every statement which he makes. That is a very business-like way of writing history.

First, then, as to the origin and attainments of Aldhelm. He was a Saxon by race, of a family beyond doubt most noble. Faritius had said that his name was really Aldelmus, not Aldhelmus, and that it meant "the kindly (almus) old man." But William disputed that, and showed that the Saint himself, in the Prologue to his Enigmas, had regarded the *h* as essential, the name meaning "the old helm," or helmet. It may be noted that in the Anglo-Saxon list of bishops in MS. 140, C. C. C. C., we find *Aldelmus* with the *h* interlined above, and in the early tenth century list in MS. 183 we find Adelm.

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The Prologue to the Enigmas thus referred to consists of thirty-six hexameter lines, and is a double acrostic, the first and last letter of each line being one of the thirty-six letters of the line

Aldhelmus cecinit millenis versibus odas,

"Aldhelm sang odes in a thousand verses." Considering the nature of the Latin language, Aldhelm would probably have been glad to be rid of the letter *h* from the acrostic on his name, for a Latin word ending in *h* is far to seek. He got over the difficulty rather skilfully, thus:

H orrida nam mulctans torsisti membra Behemot H

"Thou (the Almighty) hast racked the horrid limbs of Behemoth." The *b* of *versibus* would naturally present a similar difficulty; he gets out of it by making two long syllables of the name Job:

B elligero quondam qui vires tradidit Io B.

As to family, the tradition was that Aldhelm was the nephew of Ina, King of the West Saxons, his father, Kenten, being Ina's brother. But William rejected that on the ground, among others, that Aldhelm was a great deal older than Ina. The argument is

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clenched by the fact that in King Alfred's Handbook, to which William had access, it was shown that he was not a near but a distant relation of Ina. That he was of Saxon race, William proves from Aldhelm's own words in a letter to a Scotic correspondent, Cellanus, which we shall see at a later stage.

In his next statement, about Aldhelm's earliest years, William is mistaken. He says that Kenten would not send his son to any ordinary master; he sent him to be taught the first elements by Adrian, the Abbat of Saint Augustine's, Canterbury, whom he knew to be at the very summit of knowledge. There, while still a boy, he became so learned in Greek and Latin as to outshine his teachers themselves. When he was a little older, he returned from Kent to Wessex, and became a monk in the monastery of Meldun, at a place whose ancient name, as William learned from King Alfred's writings, was Mailduberi, or Mealduberi [1], its name in William's time being Malmesberi; a corrupt age, he says,

[1] If William had written this *Maelduberi,* he would have given the correct alternative form. The only mention of a person of this name (the dark tonsured servant) in the Annals of the Four Masters is in the form Maeldubh. He was one of the nobles killed in 622 at a great battle in the south of Limerick.

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had changed the name. This monastery was founded by Meldum[1], also called Meildulf, a Scot (that is, an Irishman) by nation, a philosopher by learning, a monk by profession. The Scot had voluntarily left his native land, and in his journeyings had reached this place. Taken with the amenity of the woods, which were very extensive there, he lived as a hermit. Supplies failing, he took scholars to teach, that their gifts might help to support him. When their education was completed, they became monks, and a convent of no inconsiderable size was the result. Their companionship and example led Aldhelm, who was one of the pupils, to further study, and he added the liberal arts to his store of knowledge. In order to drink from the fountain-head, he went again to Canterbury and studied at the feet of Adrian, who was a fount of letters, a stream of arts; but his health broke down and he had to return to Malmesbury. Let the proofs follow the tenor of what has been said, that the confidence of those who hear may be firm. That Adrian taught him in his infancy he himself tells as follows in his letter to that master:—"To Adrian, the most reverend father and vener-

[1] Or Meldun.

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ated teacher of my rude infancy, Aldhelm, greeting, &c." That he was nourished and taught in the monastery of Meldun, Bishop Leutherius shows in the ordinance by which he gave the abbacy to Aldhelm:—"I, Leutherius, by the grace of God bishop, ruling the Saxon pontificate, have been requested by the abbats who under the jurisdiction of our diocese are known to preside over the cenobial band of monks, to bestow the territory named Maldulfesbirg upon the presbyter Aldhelm, that he may there lead the regular life. For in that place he has lived from the first flower of his infancy, and studied letters from the very beginning, and been nourished in the bosom of holy Mother Church." That Meldum built the monastery, Pope Sergius declares in the privilege which he gave to Aldhelm:—"Thy religion begging of us that in the place of our founder, chief of the apostles, we should strengthen with apostolic privileges the monastery of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, which Meldum of religious memory built, now named Meldumesburg, situated in the province of Saxony, we have favourably received thy pious petition."

This will be a convenient place for some remarks on the origin of the name Malmesbury.

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In its earliest forms the name is clearly derived from the name of the Irish teacher Maildubh, either in that form or in the form Meldun or Meldum. We have Maildubiensis ecclesia, Maldubiensis, Maldubesburg, Maldulfesburg, Maldumesburg, Meldulfesburg, Meldubesburg, Meldumesburg. Other forms of the name are clearly connected with Aldhelm—Ealdelmesbyrig, Mealdelmesbyrig, Maldelmesburuh.

In the index to Thorpe's edition of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle the initial *m* of Mealdelmesbyrig is explained as a survival of the Latin prefix *in*, as Inrhypum, *Ripon*, and Ingetlingum, *Gilling*; but if Mr. Thorpe had been living in these days of more scientific views, he would no doubt have felt that to be an impossible explanation. Mr. Plummer, in his invaluable edition of Bede's historical works, writing at length on the forms of the name in connection with Bede's mention of it as *Maildufi urbs*, remarks that "the greater fame of Aldhelm eclipsed that of the original founder, and we find the place called Ealdelmesburg, Aldhelm's borough." "By a contamination of this with the older forms we get Mealdelmesburg, which became the prevailing form, and through various grada-

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tions . . . became the modern Malmesbury." Among these gradations Mr. Plummer quotes William's remark, "quod nunc corruptior aetas Malmesbiriam nuncupat;" but William appends that remark not to one of the forms derived from Aldhelm, but to the form which, as he says, shows that Maildulf built, or rather commenced the monastery, Meldunense.

If there were no other explanation possible, the contamination theory might serve. The earliest MS. of the Chronicle which mentions Malmesbury was apparently written in 1016, and it has the form Ealdelmesburg, as has also a copy written about 1046. The two copies of the Chronicle which have Mealdelmesburg are of the next century. These are the only appearances of the name in the Chronicle, and it is possible that they represent a sort of fungus growth of the initial letter *m*. But we may take it as almost or quite certain that when Maildubh addressed his favourite pupil and eventual successor, he did not call him Aldhelm, or pronounce the *dh* in his name, but called him Mallem, "my dear Aldhelm." The Gaelic of to-day makes the same elision of the vowel in mo (my) and do (thy),—O m' anam, O my soul! That it

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was the practice among the early Irish is a very familiar fact. Ninian's work in connection with Irish students two centuries before Aldhelm's time is noted by the survival of his name in the form Monenn, my dear Ninian. St. Mogue is Mo-aedh-og, where we have the disappearance of the *dh* according to the Irish rule. Gregory of Tours calls (in many copies of his Hist. Fr. ii. 28) Chlotilda's sister Chrona or Corona, *Mucuruna,* clearly meaning "dear Chrona." If there is anything in the suggestion made at page 47, that Maïldubh was one of the band of scholar-monks who accompanied St. Carthach from Rahan to Lismore, he was very familiar with the fact that his own master, Carthach, had as a child been named by his master, the elder Carthach, whose favourite pupil he was, Mochuda, dear Cuda; and it would be most natural that he should himself call his own favourite pupil by a similarly formed name of endearment, Mallem. The practice was kept up at Lismore through Maildubh's time, for the Abbat Colman, who died in 702, was named in his early days Mocholmoc, mo-Colum-og, dear little Colman. This fact Maildubh would no doubt know well, whether he was specially connected

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with Lismore or not. There is thus plenty of evidence, certainly contemporary and probably local, in favour of Mallem as Maildubh's pet name for his favourite and princely pupil. But indeed it is quite unnecessary to labour the point of this initial *m*, or to spend any words on the disappearance of the *dh*. The Saxon Mallemesbury would thus be simply "The borough of Mallem," and was no doubt exactly the local pronunciation before it was softened into the modern Marmsbury. The local survival of Aldhelm's pet name, among people so devoted to the use of pet names as the Saxons were, accounts for all the phenomena, and gives to the name Malmesbury a wonderful interest. I should add that of the two learned friends whom as students of the Irish language I have consulted, one, an Englishman, will not accept my suggestion; the other, Irish of the Irish, has no doubt about its correctness. In my own enquiries among Gaelic-speaking persons in the west of Scotland, Mallem is universally given as their equivalent of "dear Aldhelm." The Irish use is preserved in Macdonnell as the equivalent of Macdonald.

We have seen that Malmesbury was made an abbey, and Aldhelm was made abbat, by

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the bishop of the diocese, at the request of certain abbats,—the abbats of the diocese, it appears. But Aldhelm in his turn, as we shall see[1], gave the appointment of abbat of the Abbeys of Malmesbury, Frome, and Bradford, to the monks. This marks a great change of policy. St. Benedict had forbidden the appointment of abbats by bishops, and by degrees the monks got the appointment into their hands. Aldhelm had introduced the Benedictine Rule in his abbeys, and it was natural that he should carry out this important feature. In the *Praise of Virgins*, he says of Benedict that he gave the Rule of Life which he and those whom he addressed observed:—

> Primo qui statuit nostrae certamina vitae
> Qualiter optatam teneant coenobia famam.

To resume William's argument.

That he went a second time to Canterbury to study, but was driven away by ill health, is shown by his letter to Adrian mentioned above:—

"I confess, my very dear one, whom I embrace in pure and thankful love, that since I was cut off from residence in your friendly society on my departure from Kent about

[1] See p. 144.

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three years ago, I have burned with the ardent desire to be with you again; and that I have long intended, so far as the wish is concerned, to carry out this desire, if chance and circumstance allowed, and various obstacles did not come in the way; especially if I were not prevented by bodily weakness, through an affliction which parches to the marrow my wasting limbs; this it was that when, after my first course, I was with you again, drove me home."

We have to understand that Aldhelm in his humility wrote of Adrian as his teacher in rudiments in his earliest years, in his rude infancy, when in fact he only meant that he owed to him all the knowledge which he valued most. He was probably quite thirty years old when he first went to Canterbury to sit at Adrian's feet; for Adrian only began to teach there about the year 670. William took him too literally, not having much sense of humour or appreciation of metaphor. To understand Aldhelm with that last defect is impossible.

These facts, William continues, with their evidence that he enjoyed the privilege of residence in so learned a society, are sufficient proof that he was a competent scholar in the

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liberal arts. Indeed, his own testimony to that effect is not wanting, for he tells us that he was the first of all the men of his race to turn his intellect to the study of Latin verses and metres. These are his words, at the end of the book which he wrote on the construction of verses[1]: "Here you have the notes of my poor intelligence on the kinds and forms of metres, collected very laboriously, I know not if fruitfully; I do know that I could make the Virgilian boast[2], 'If life last, and I return to my fatherland, I shall be the first to bring with me the Muses from the summit of Helicon.'"

Fully instructed, then, in letters, he did not neglect versification in his native tongue; indeed, King Alfred states in the work already quoted, that in no age has any one been found equal to him, for he could write a poem in English, compose a tune for it, and either sing it to the tune or recite it. King Alfred adds that Aldhelm composed the English street-song which is still—that is, in 1130—in common use, and gives the reason why

[1] William had, apparently, a shorter recension of the "Letter to Aldfrith," which in its present form fills thirty-two pages 8vo, not reckoning the enigmas.

[2] *Georgic* iii. 10, 11.

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a man of such mark gave attention to things which seem frivolous. The people in his time were half-barbarous, did not care for divine discourses; they had the habit of running off to their homes as soon as mass was sung. So the holy man set himself on the bridge which connects the town of Malmesbury with the country—there are now four such bridges at Malmesbury, at four quarters of the town, the ground falling steeply to each bridge—and met them as they were leaving church, in the guise of a teacher of the art of singing. This he did more than once, and the people liked it and gathered about him in crowds. Under cover of this disguise, he slipped in by degrees stories of Scripture in his secular verse, and thus brought the people back to a better mind. Here William moralises, knowing the country. If Aldhelm had thought to produce the desired result by severity and excommunication, he would never have succeeded.

We moderns in this twentieth century may well lament that this famous Handbook of King Alfred, the composition of which Asser describes in so very interesting a manner [1], is now lost. Some time or other it is to be hoped that a copy may be found.

[1] See my paper on *Alfred as a religious man.*

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To proceed with William's account.

The letters addressed to Aldhelm show in how great repute his learning was held. We need not speak of letters from his own countrymen, who vied with one another in sending to him their writings for his criticism; nor of the Scots [Irish], at that time in the first rank of learning, who acted in like manner, some of whom we could name as of no mean position in the world, especially Artwil[1], a son of a Scottish [Irish] king. Everything in the way of literature which Artwil elaborated, and it was of no mean quality, he submitted to Aldhelm's judgement, that his perfected

[1] No one, so far as I know, has any suggestion to make as to the identity of this literary Irish prince. There are two persons named in Irish history either of whom so far as name (however disguised) and date are concerned might be Aldhelm's correspondent. Only one it is true was the son of a king of Ireland; but the other was at least a chieftain; his name is identically the same; and he was in Britain. This was Aurthuile Ua (O') Crunnmaeil, chief of Cinel Eoghain, who in 698 was driven from his chieftaincy into Britain. The other was Artghal, son of Loingseach, king of Ireland; he was killed in a battle in Sligo in 701, in the eighth year of his father's reign. These dates are late in Aldhelm's life, but we must suppose that it took many years to build up his wide reputation for refined scholarship. Dr. Stubbs read the name as Arcuil, and thought it probably a corruption of Acircius; Acircius, however, that is, Aldfrith, was not the son of a Scottish king.

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genius might file off the Scottish [Irish] roughnesses. Even from among the Franks they came to him for his learning, as the following letter shows:—

"To my lord Aldhelm the archimandrite, enriched in the study of letters, adorned by honey-bearing work by night, who in a marvellous manner has acquired in the land of the Saxons that which some in foreign parts hardly obtain by dint of toilsome labour, Cellanus, born in the island of Hibernia, dwelling obscurely in an extreme corner of the limits of the Franks, exile from a renowned settlement, the lowest and meanest slave of Christ, greeting in the Trinity whole and sure." Then, after some further words, "Though we are not worthy to hear thee, present among us, we read thy finely constructed writings, painted with the delights of divers flowers. But if you would refresh the sad heart of a pilgrim in a foreign land, send me a few of the discourses of those most fair lips of thine, the rills derived from whose most pure fountain may refresh the minds of many, in the place where the lord Fursey rests in holy and whole body."

This request for some of Aldhelm's sermons, which Cellanus might use for his congrega-

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tion, his own fountain having apparently run rather dry, came no doubt from Peronne; for there the remains of the Irish saint Fursey are known to have rested at that time. Fursey, it is not necessary to remark, was one of the many close links between Ireland and early England, and between Ireland and the continent of Europe, of which we have detailed record. As between England and Ireland he was one of the earliest links, reaching East Anglia in the time of King Sigebert the patron of learning (reigned 631 to 634), who was the first to establish schools in the neighbourhood of Cambridge. When the ravages of the pagan Penda devastated East Anglia, he left the cell which he had constructed within the great Roman walls which we call Burgh Castle, and settled at Lagny, some twenty miles from Paris, under the protection of the chief minister of the Frankish kingdom, whose residence was at Peronne.

The liberal response[1] which Aldhelm made to the request of Cellanus, of whom we know nothing more than is here stated[2], was prefaced

[1] William assumes that the response was liberal from the fragment of Aldhelm's reply which follows.

[2] Coelan, a monk of Iniscaltra in Lough Derg, who lived probably about this time or a little later, wrote the

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by a deprecatory sentence:—"I wonder that from the renowned and flower-bearing fields of the Franks, the activity of your charming fraternity accosts me, a humble man of no repute[1], born of the Saxon race, and cherished in the tender cradle of infancy under a northern sky."

William remarks that it would be difficult to describe the great influence which Aldhelm had with his friends and his pupils. The former he exhorted to be unflinchingly faithful to friendship; the latter, to guide their early years in exact accordance with divine precept. William proceeds to set forth two of the letters which Aldhelm wrote, the one on the duty of friends, the other to a pupil; believing that he would thus indicate clearly how true Aldhelm was to his friends, how careful for his disciples.

In order that we may understand the point and force of the former of these two letters, we must make a digression. The episode to which the letter introduces us is of the high-

sixth life of St. Brigid of Kildare, which was taken to the Continent and was found at Monte Cassino. Cellan is also another form of Cellach, a name common enough.

[1] *Tantillum homunculum*, "Such a poor little creature as I am."

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est importance in the history of the Church of England, and the parts which Aldhelm and Wessex respectively played in it are of national as well as local interest.

That able, restless, charming person Wilfrith, who was so ready to cry, "I'll tell the pope" when the kings and the archbishop dealt with him in the independent way which is of the nature of Englishmen, flashed across Wessex by way of Mercia in Aldhelm's time. He had been imprisoned by King Ecgfrith of Northumbria, in accordance with the decree of the council of that kingdom, the Archbishop Theodore being present, for appealing to Rome, or for some offence connected with that appeal [1]. His first place of imprisonment was a dark dungeon in the royal city of Bromnis, a place not identified, and his custodian was the royal prefect Osfrith. Osfrith's wife was taken ill, and seemed to be dying, whereupon the prefect begged to be relieved of his prisoner. Wilfrith was then sent to Dunbar, to the charge of a more ferocious prefect, by name Tydlin. William of Malmesbury calls him Tinber, but that must be

[1] I have no doubt myself that the punishment was for the offence of appealing to a foreign jurisdiction. See my *Theodore and Wilfrith*, Lectures IV and V.

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merely another spelling of the correct form of the name of the place Dunbar, Dynbaer. Ecgfrith's queen, who was a bitter enemy of Wilfrith, was residing at the nunnery of Coldingham, with Abbess Ebbe, the king's aunt. In the night the queen was visited by a demon and terribly flogged. Ebbe found her in the morning gathered up into a knot and evidently dying. They begged the king to release Wilfrith. He did so, and the queen recovered. Wilfrith retired to the court of the Mercian sub-king, the nephew of King Ethelred of Mercia. But Ethelred's queen [1] was a sister of Ecgfrith, and Wilfrith was expelled from Mercia. He then went to Centwine, King of Wessex. But Centwine's queen was a sister of Iurmenburg, Ecgfrith's queen, and Wilfrith was expelled from Wessex. As is now well known, these expulsions had the happy effect of driving him into the one kingdom where Ecgfrith's influence did not prosecute him further, the still pagan Sussex, and thus it came about that he converted the South Saxons to Christianity.

[1] This was Osthryth, daughter of King Oswy. She translated the relics of her uncle, King Oswald, to the Abbey of Bardney. For some unexplained reason, the chief men of Mercia put her to death in 697, seven years before her husband's resignation.

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From the letter addressed by Aldhelm to the clergy of Wilfrith, it seems clear that he took Wilfrith's side; and it is quite possible that this encouraged the extruded and banished bishop to come to Wessex, where a nobleman named Berhtwald[1] received him hospitably. Indeed, considering the circumstances, we might surmise that he actually came to Malmesbury, especially as Berhtwald was a land-owner there, and gave Somerford to Aldhelm in 685. That gift was six or seven years after Wilfrith's flying visit; so on the whole it may be supposed that Somerford was the place of Wilfrith's retreat until the order came to move him on. This probably means Somerford Keynes, of which this diocese has been robbed by its transfer from Wilts to Gloucestershire.

Eddi, Wilfrith's chaplain and biographer, tells us that when Wilfrith with his companions sought a place of exile in the southern

[1] This was the sub-king above referred to, the nephew of King Ethelred. He was the son of Wulfhere, Ethelred's elder brother and predecessor. His own elder brother Coenred succeeded Ethelred in 704, resigned (as Ethelred had done in 704, to become a monk at Bardeney) in 709, the year of the death of Aldhelm and Wilfrith, was tonsured at Rome, became a monk, and died there, Bede does not tell us in what year.

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kingdoms, a man of noble birth, Berhtwald by name, brother's son of Ethelred King of the Mercians, met him, and was favourably disposed towards him. When Berhtwald saw him accompanied by men of such mark, and heard from the holy doctor the causes of his exile and journey, he adjured him in the name of God to remain with him. He promised with the greatest readiness to give a portion of his territory for the residence of the servants of God. The holy prelate gave thanks to God, who had afforded the solace of repose, and at once proceeded to found, in the territory given for God, a little monastery, which his monks possess up to this day [that is, when Eddi wrote the Life, after Wilfrith's death in 709]. Thereupon, the old enemy of mankind being ever watchful, Ethelred the king, and his queen the sister of King Ecgfrith, hearing that the man of God was abiding there and at rest for a time, to curry favour with King Ecgfrith forbade Berhtwald, for his safety's sake, to harbour him for the space of one single day. Our pontiff, then, was expelled with hatred, his monks, however, remaining. He went to the King of the West Saxons, Centwine by name, and for a short space, till persecution followed him up, he

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remained there. The queen there was a sister of Iurmenburg, Ecgfrith's queen, and hated him exceedingly; and Wilfrith was driven away, that the friendly relations among the three kings named might not be disturbed. Driven out of all Christian kingdoms, he went in despair to the South Saxons, still pagan, and told his story to Ethelwalch, their king. Ethelwalch promised his friendship, and vowed that neither threats of invasion should frighten him, nor promises of gifts and wealth should seduce him, into breaking his plighted friendship. He kept his word,—dare we say, like a Christian. It happened that Ceadwalla, who had been expelled by faction from his kingdom of Wessex, saw a great deal of Wilfrith in his exile, often coming to him for counsel, which Wilfrith freely gave; William adds that he gave him also money, and provided him with horses. When Ceadwalla came to his own again, there was nothing he would not do for Wilfrith; and without Wilfrith's approval he would do nothing. We cannot doubt that to this close intercourse with Wilfrith was due the desire, which Ceadwalla eventually carried into execution, to go to Rome, to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and there to die. It is clear, also, that

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the simile of a secular prince in exile, which Aldhelm introduces into his letter, had reference to the exile of Ceadwalla.

We can now turn to the

Letter of Aldhelm to the Clergy of Wilfrith.

"Recently, as you know by experience, a furious storm has shaken the foundations of the Church, as a great earthquake: its noise, like the sound of thunder, has gone crashing through divers regions of the earth. On my knees I earnestly pray you, be not made to stumble by this disturbance. Let not the faith of any one of you grow dull, even though necessity drive you forth with your bishop from fatherland, and send you to realms beyond the sea. What, I ask, could separate you from that prelate who has nourished you, taught you, chastened you, and brought you from earliest infancy to pious manhood?"

Then, as so often, Aldhelm could not resist the temptation to work in his favourite metaphor of a hive of bees, the special point in this case being their following one leader wheresoever that one leader goes. He continues:—

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"Tell me, I ask you, are not they to be branded with abominable infamy, who, having received the sevenfold grace of the Spirit, break the reins of devoted submission as though driven by frenzy. Listen to me while I add an argument to strengthen your minds. If secular persons, ignorant of the divine knowledge, have loved a secular master in his prosperity, but when prosperity has ceased, and adversity comes, desert him, and prefer the safe repose of their own sweet land to sharing the affliction of their exiled lord, does not every one pour upon them ridicule, scorn, execration? What then shall be said of you, if you allow the pontiff who has nursed you, and has raised you, to go into exile alone?"

So far as Wilfrith's clergy were concerned, who accompanied him to Wessex, it is clear that very strong and plain language was required, in Aldhelm's judgement, to keep them true; and it appears that in the end, whatever effect his appeal may have had upon their purpose, they did as a fact remain behind, at least for some time, while Wilfrith went on to Sussex without them.

That letter, William says, having shown Aldhelm's unbroken firmness of fidelity to a

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friend, another letter shall prove how admirable was the advice he gave to a pupil:—

"To Ethelwald, my dearest son, and pupil too, Aldhelm, the lowest of the servants of God, greeting.

"I used often to caution you by word of mouth about many things; and now that you are absent, I continue to advise you by letter, relying on the authority which is after God; for I do it as Paul did, 'because the love of Christ constraineth us.' So then, my dearest son, though you are growing to man's estate, do not unduly submit yourself to the empty pleasures of this world, whether in daily drinkings and feastings, which are superfluous, and dishonourable when too frequent and prolonged, or in culpable ridings about on horseback[1], or in pleasures of bodily delight which are to be execrated. Remember always that it is written, 'Youth and pleasure are vain.' I ad-

[1] This appears to have been an Anglo-Saxon view of riding about for pleasure. Among the beautifully drawn Anglo-Saxon illustrations of Prudentius on the Virtues and Vices, in the Cotton MS. Cleopatra, C. viii, ff. 1–34, Pride is shown in four drawings careering about on horseback (ff. 10 b–12 b). On f. 12 b and f. 13 are two drawings of Pride, (1) having an overwhelming fall, (2) lying prostrate before Humility, while the horse gallops away. Does the proverb "Pride shall have a fall" come from this, or is the illustration derived from the proverb?

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monish you, therefore, be not a slave to much money or to the boastfulness, always hateful to God, of secular glory, remembering this, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? For the Son of Man will come in His own glory and of the holy angels, and will recompense to every man according to his works.' Rather, my dearest one, much rather, watch always in divine readings or sacred prayers. And if you labour to know something besides of secular letters, do it only for this, that as in the divine law all or almost all the text is constructed on grammatical rules, you may the more easily understand, as you read, the most profound and sacred senses of the divine word, as you have the more fully learned the very diverse rules which govern its construction. Omit not to place this letter at once among the books which you read; that by very frequent perusal it may warn you in my stead. Farewell."

Would that this advice were taken by the monks who call themselves followers of Aldhelm, for their advantage and profit, William ejaculates, so that, contemning the enticements of pleasures, they should strive to follow in the footsteps of his sanctity and learning.

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Surely his foundations would never have been torn up if we had not transgressed his injunctions. We have been guilty towards him, and we are rightly afflicted. He, meanwhile, is silent, as though he knoweth not, takes no notice, as though he seeth not, while we pass our time in peril, his privileges derided by rebellious men, trampled under foot by tyrants. Let us turn again to him, however late, that he may cast the eye of his piety on his household, tossed amid many perils, and may gather us once more into the bosom of his mercy.

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CHAPTER IV

The desire to visit the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul. —The Schola Saxonum in Rome, and the English College there.—The origin of the ecclesiastical regard for Rome. —Aldhelm's style.—His knowledge.—The monasteries which he built.—Great gifts to Aldhelm's monastery.— The churches which he built.

MENTION was made in the previous chapter of Ceadwalla's visit to the tombs of the Apostles at Rome. The desire to visit the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome was so marked a feature of the time with which we are dealing, that it is impossible to pass it by without special notice here. There is in connection with Ceadwalla's visit the unusually interesting fact that it left an abiding mark in Rome.

The retirement from great secular positions, towards the end of life, to spend the closing years in the peace of a monastery, was of frequent occurrence in the earliest days of English Christianity. Kings and queens, great lords and great ladies, wearied with the burdens of their position, in some cases having lost the power or the zest for the things of the

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flesh, withdrew to the cloister. Or, as Bede shows in his letter to Archbishop Ecgbert of York, great persons founded monasteries, and ruled there in much luxury, even in riot and wantonness. But the desire to visit the tombs of the Princes of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, with the purpose, in many cases, of dying there, came from a very different impulse, and appears to have been more free from mixed motives. We cannot do better than preface our remarks with the quotation of one stanza from Aubrey de Vere's translation[1] of St. Columba's *Song of Lament* when he visited, on the eve of his expatriation, the Isle of Aran, in his judgement the fairest of Ireland's sights:—

> O Aran, Sun of all the West!
> My heart is thine! As sweet to close
> Our dying eyes in thee, as rest
> Where Peter and where Paul repose.

Of the kingdoms of the Heptarchy, Kent, East Anglia, and Northumbria do not give us examples of kings resigning the throne and going to die at Rome[2]. The kingdom of the East Saxons affords one example, that of

[1] *St. Columba*, p. 32: Hitt, Edinburgh, 1897.

[2] Ecgred of Northumbria, the brother of Archbishop Ecgbert of York, and of Eadbert afterwards King of Northumbria, died at Rome about 733.

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Offa, son of Sighere and St. Osyth; he went to Rome with Coenred, King of Mercia, in 709, the year of Aldhelm's death, having reigned about five years. Bede gives a charming account of this Offa, "a young man of most lovable age and beauty, intensely desired by his whole nation as one who could hold and retain the sceptre of the kingdom; he left wife, lands, relatives, and country, for the sake of Christ and for the sake of the Gospel, that in this life he might receive a hundredfold, and in the world to come eternal life." He was tonsured at Rome, lived there as a monk, and at length, before Bede finished his history, that is, before 732, passed to the long-desired vision of the blessed apostles in heaven.

Turning to the kingdom of the West Saxons, with which we are mainly concerned, and to the kingdom of Mercia, with which Aldhelm had much to do, the names of Ceadwalla and Ina of Wessex, and of Coenred of Mercia, stand out prominently. Ceadwalla's purpose in going to Rome is clearly stated by Bede (*H. E.* v. 7); it was, that he might obtain the singular glory of being cleansed in the font of baptism at the threshold of the blessed apostles. Dr. Giles translated this "in the

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church of the blessed apostles," leaving the English readers to wonder what church that was. The elegiac verses set over his tomb in Rome omitted all mention of St. Paul, and declared that he came to behold "Peter and Peter's seat"; an Irishman would suggest that the seventh-century author was imitating the Roman controversialists of the nineteenth. Ina, Bede tells in the same chapter, succeeded Ceadwalla on the throne, and having reigned thirty-seven years over the West Saxons, gave up the kingdom like his predecessor, and went away to Rome, to the threshold of the blessed apostles, desiring to spend the rest of his life in the neighbourhood of the holy places, that he might the more readily be received in heaven by the saints; which thing, Bede adds, many persons of the English race have in these times done in their zeal, noble and ignoble, laics and clerics, men and women. We do not know what the eighth-century poet in Rome said of Ina's purpose; but we do know that the nineteenth-century Roman bishops in England one and all joined in a statement that Bede in this chapter states the purpose of Ina and the practice of the English of his time to be that they might visit the place of the holy apostle,

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St. Peter, boldly altering Bede's words from the plural, for St. Peter and St. Paul, to the singular. The assertion was made in the course of their argument that England was dedicated to St. Peter; it was only one of several assertions similarly contrary to historical fact. The third of the kings named, Coenred of Mercia, had the same purpose. In the year in which Aldhelm and Wilfrith died, Coenred resigned the throne of Mercia, went to Rome, and became a monk at the threshold of the apostles. There cannot be the slightest question that the attraction to Rome was the presence of the tombs, and of the actual remains, of the two twin-chiefs of the apostles, Peter and Paul. If any one is inclined to think that this is a controvertible statement, made *ex parte* by one who maintains the Anglican position against the Petrine claims of Rome, he has only to turn to the writings of fair-minded Romans. Thus on one page (481) of Bishop John Healy's *Insula Sanctorum* we read: "It is stated in the ancient Life of Finbarr that, like many other of the Irish saints of his time, he went on a pilgrimage to Rome—to the threshold of the apostles." "It was," Giraldus says, "the custom in those times for the Irish to go on

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pilgrimage to Rome in order to venerate the shrines of the apostles."

Wilfrith, in his argument at Whitby, when Colman had rested his case upon St. John the Evangelist, quoted against Colman and his narrow sphere of Ireland and Lindisfarne the practice of all the rest of the world known to him. Among other evidence of practice he refers to Rome, and he states the claim of Rome upon the attention of the conference in these words[1], "Rome, where the blessed apostles Peter and Paul lived, taught, suffered, and were buried." The Irish martyrology of Gorman notes June 29 as follows[2]—*Petar Pol ar primchind*, "Peter, Paul, our leading chiefs." Pope Paul I, fifty years after Wilfrith's appeal to Rome, wrote thus to a Northumbrian king: "Abbat Forthred has come to the threshold of your protectors, the blessed princes [or chiefs] of the apostles." Bede, as we shall see, spoke of Peter and Paul as the blessed chiefs of the apostles. Aldhelm, as we shall also see, visited Rome that he might see the long-wished-for thresholds of the chiefs of the apostles, *Principum Apostolorum*; and we must remember that this

[1] *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, p. 184.
[2] Ibid., p. 177.

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phrase comes to us from William of Malmesbury, writing as late as 1130.

But, indeed, the parity in supremacy among the apostles in ecclesiastical authority is beyond dispute. Every Pope practically declares it. The Pope cursed Magna Charta by virtue of the power of the two apostles. To this day the papal bulls run in the name of Peter and Paul[1].

We have remarked incidentally that Ceadwalla's visit to Rome made an abiding mark there. He died during the week between baptism and chrism-loosing, and was buried in the *atrium* or "paradise" of the Basilica of St. Peter. Two inscriptions were set over him, one a poem of twelve distichs, the other a short prose sentence, setting forth the main facts. Both are given by Bede (*H. E.* v. 7); the latter ran thus: "Here is deposited Ceadwalla, called also Peter, a King of the Saxons, who lived about thirty years, on the twelfth day of the Kalends of May, the second indiction, the most pious Augustus the lord Justinian being emperor, in the fourth year of his consulship, and in the second year of the pontificate of the apostolic lord Pope Sergius."

[1] See more on pp. 250–258.

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Lanciani, in his *New Tales of Ancient Rome*[1], informs us that an Italian writer, Giovanni de Deis, described in 1589 the discovery of the sarcophagus with the remains of the king and with the inscriptions, in the course of digging the foundations of the new Basilica of St. Peter under Sixtus V. Lanciani adds that they were presumably broken up and thrown as material into the trenches.

William of Malmesbury tells us that two other English kings were buried in this "paradise" or cloister-garth[2], Offa of the East Saxons and Coenred of Mercia, both of whom had become monks in one of the cloisters near the Vatican. We are not told whether Ina also, and his queen Æthelburga, were buried in this *atrium* or in the national church of S. Maria de Burgo Saxonum, founded or enlarged by Ina himself.

The "School of the Saxons," which gathered round this church, was the earliest and foremost of the foreign colonies which clustered round St. Peter's. It dates from 727; while the School of the Lombards was only founded by Queen Ansa in 770, and those of the

[1] Chapter vii, English Memorials in Rome.

[2] "Paradise" is, of course, here taken in its primary meaning of a garden or park.

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Franks and the Frisians by Charlemagne towards the end of the century. The Saxon Schola consisted of a hospice for pilgrims and a chapel dedicated to St. Mary. This chapel is still in existence, much altered and modernized, but retaining a reminiscence of its ancient name in its present designation of Santo Spirito in Sassia. The whole quarter of the Borgo takes its name from the title—de Burgo Saxonum—of our English colony, which gradually spread over the principal part of that quarter.

In my paper on *King Alfred as a religious man* I pointed out the coincidence of the fortification of this Burgus with the visit to Rome of Ethelwulf and his young son Alfred. St. Peter's was up to that time *fuori le mura*, like the other greatest Basilica, St. Paul's. St. Peter's and the Burgus were enclosed with walls by Pope Leo, and the quarter was thence called the Leonine City. It was natural that the English should contribute to this work, which protected their pilgrims and dwellers in Rome from such devastations as that by the Saracens in 846. To the same close personal interest we must attribute the establishment of the Romescot, or Romfeah, Peter's Pence.

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All this had nothing to do with the "English College" in Rome. The Schola Saxonum was ruined in various wars, and was abandoned soon after 1200. Innocent III thereupon transferred the site and revenues to the newly-founded Hospital of S. Spirito. The jubilee of 1300 renewed the concourse of English people to Rome. Appeals to Rome multiplied. The English missed the old receptacle. A London merchant, John Shepherd, purchased houses in the Via di Monserrato, made them a receptacle for pilgrims and travellers, under the invocation of the Holy Trinity and St. Thomas, and with his wife became its first superintendent. The original deed is in the English College, and shows that the foundation was made about the year 1362. The present church of St. Thomas à Becket was only commenced in 1870.

The existing Pilgrims' Books of the English College, which have been published, only begin at the end of the year 1580, just after the great discovery of the triumphal arch of Claudius, erected A.D. 52 in honour of the capture of Caractacus and the subjugation of eleven kings of Britain. That arch was the first beginning in Rome of the visible marks of this island.

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Although the Schola Saxonum has disappeared, the Burgus, as we have said, which took its name from the fact of its being the residence of the English colony, survives on the old site in the name of the Borgo de S. Spirito; and the Saxon residents themselves are perpetuated in the name of the church of the Hospital, S. Spirito in Sassia.

We must now return to our history.

In discussing Aldhelm's style, William quotes Bede's remarks on that subject, and asks justly could any higher praise be given. We may as well take this opportunity of noting what it is in all that Bede says[1] of Aldhelm, writing twenty years after his death:

"On the death of Haeddi, the bishop of the West Saxons, the bishopric of that province was divided into two. One was given to Daniel, and he still rules over it; the other was given to Aldhelm, who for four years presided over it with the utmost vigour: both of them being sufficiently instructed in ecclesiastical matters and in knowledge of the Scriptures. When Aldhelm was still a presbyter, and abbat of the monastery which

[1] *H. E.* v. 18.

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they call Maildufs town, he wrote, at the request of a synod of his nation, an excellent book against the error of the Brettons, which consists in their keeping Easter not at its right time, and doing very many other things contrary to ecclesiastical purity and peace. The study of this book brought over many of the Brettons who were subject to the West Saxons to the catholic observance of Easter. He wrote also an excellent book on Virginity, which after the example of Sedulius he duplicated, writing it both in hexameter verse and in prose. He wrote, besides, some other things, being a man most learned in all directions. His style was neat and clear, and his erudition both in liberal and in ecclesiastical writings was wonderful. On his death, Forthere the present bishop succeeded; and he, too, is deeply learned in the holy Scriptures."

We may well say *Laudari a laudato viro.*

That is all that Bede has to say, and it will be seen that he tells us nothing of Aldhelm's life, beyond the fact that he was abbat of Malmesbury and bishop of one of the two parts of the West Saxon diocese. In another passage he names him incidentally, telling us that Pecthelm, the first bishop of

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the church of Candida Casa, or Whithern, had long been Aldhelm's deacon and monk. This was not the only link between Aldhelm and the north of England, as we shall see.

In this notice by Bede, we see how very coldly he speaks of the attainments of Daniel and Aldhelm when he names them together: they were sufficiently instructed in ecclesiastical matters and in knowledge of the Scriptures. That coldness is clearly due to the fact that Daniel as well as Aldhelm is spoken of; for when Bede comes to speak of Aldhelm alone he uses superlative expressions. Indeed, he says of him what no one who has wrestled with his most pompous involvements of affected and unintelligible words could possibly say, that he was clear in style. And as of Daniel's learning Bede had such strictly limited recognition to give, so of his manner of ruling his diocese he has not one word of recognition, and this is emphasized by contrast: of Daniel, "he rules it to this day"; of Aldhelm, "he presided over it with the utmost vigour." This is the more surprising because in the preface to his great work Bede states that Daniel, the very reverend bishop of the West Saxons, had sent him information about the eccle-

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siastical history of that province, as also of the South Saxons and the Isle of Wight. It may be that Bede was determined to act on the proverb "Praise not a man till he is dead." But Mr. Plummer, in his most admirable edition of Bede's historical works, quotes a passage from the *Monumenta Moguntina*[1] which may explain Bede's coldness. Among the occupants of the lower regions seen in a vision, mention is made of a great multitude of infants, who, chiefly under Bishop Daniel, died without baptism. Mr. Plummer is not aware of any ground for this charge, but Bede's marked silence is suggestive. We may remember too, that in the West Saxon laws of king Ina, Aldhelm's cousin and early patron, there is a fine of thirty shillings, corresponding to more than as many pounds now, if the baptism of an infant does not take place within thirty days of birth; and if it die without baptism, the whole of the man's property is to be taken away.

William then proceeds to state his own opinion on Aldhelm's style, and he does it in an epigrammatic manner. The inconsequent raciness which Maildubh's national charac-

[1] ed. Jaffé, no. 112, p. 276.

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teristics no doubt had imparted to his pupils, would suggest that it is a pity Aldhelm did not think of imitating William. His discourses, William says, have less of hilarity about them than readers like who think more of the manner than the matter; unfit critics, who are not aware that a nation's mode of speech accords with the nation's turn of mind. The Greek habit of speech is involved; the Roman magnificent; the English pompatic. You can note in all the ancient documents [of the English] how they delighted in abstruse words, and words taken from the Greek. Aldhelm is more moderate than others of his race; he very seldom uses exotic words, and only when really necessary[1]. His eloquent style is full of meaning, and the glamour of rhetoric sets off his very strongest statements. If you read him aright, you will guess him from his acuteness to have been a Greek; from the splendour of his language you will swear he was a Roman; from the pomp of his diction you will know that he was English.

If we turn to his own statements, in various

[1] It is surprising that any one who has read a single page of Aldhelm, taken from any part of his works, could possibly write such a sentence as this.

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parts of his writings, it is clear that Aldhelm himself felt oppressed by the multitude and complexity of his studies, especially in the scansion and construction of Latin verse. This comes out very strongly in a letter which he wrote to Bishop Haeddi, to the larger half of whose immense diocese he eventually succeeded. Haeddi had invited him to attend a function and afterwards to spend some time with him. Aldhelm hopes to come, but has so very much to do in the way of absorbing study. To Aldfrith the king of Northumbria, to whom his lengthy treatise on metres and constructions was addressed, he appeals to defend his treatise against cavillers, on the ground of the certainty that no one of their stock, sprung from the cradle of the German race, had ever laboured as his mediocrity has at this subject; and also because he has been set in the midst of so many and great disturbances of a secular nature, and the severity of the demands of ecclesiastical life and pastoral care have been so great, that his mind has had nothing like free play.

Similarly, at the end of eighty close octavo pages on the *Praise of Virginity*, addressed to the Abbess and Nuns of Barking,

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he says:—"I confess to your charity that by reason of the burden of pastoral care and the weight of worldly business I have been unable to write as clearly as I ought. Scrupulous attention to ecclesiastical rule has forbidden space for sure quiet and fastidious intervals for writing. Such opportunities are destroyed by the garrulous loquacity of chatterers and the hostile demands of secular business.... Hence my answer has been long delayed. My mind has been worried and oppressed by the burden and distractions of all kinds of business."

That brings us to an end of the first part of William's account of Aldhelm.

The second part of William's work deals with the monasteries which Aldhelm founded, the privileges he obtained for them, and the possessions with which he endowed them.

Meildulf's monastery had been so poor that the monks had scarce enough food to keep them alive; Aldhelm changed all that. There was a very small basilica there, which existed till—or nearly till—William's time, which, tradition said, Meildulf built; Aldhelm was understood to have added a more august church, in honour of the Saviour and the chief apostles, Peter and Paul. The docu-

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ments showed that in this church was the head and chief seat of the place, and the congregation of the monks. The custom at that time was that at the dedication of new churches some honorific epigram should be made to the honour of the celestial Spouse and of Mother Church; in accordance with this custom the holy man sang the epithalamium in honour of the apostles, of which we shall see something later on.

He founded also a monastery near the river called From. The church which he built there in honour of Saint John Baptist was still standing in William's time, having overcome the attacks of centuries of time. A general opinion credited him with having founded a third monastery at Bradeford; the inclusion of this town in the list of places in the privilege of Pope Sergius confirmed that opinion, and the little church then standing there, dedicated to St. Laurence, was said to have been built by him[1]. Towards the end of his life he built a wonderful church at Sherborne, which William had himself seen. In William's time, so far as the existence of monasteries was concerned, Frome and

[1] This *ecclesiola* is almost certainly still standing at Bradford on Avon. See pages 168, 177, and figure 1.

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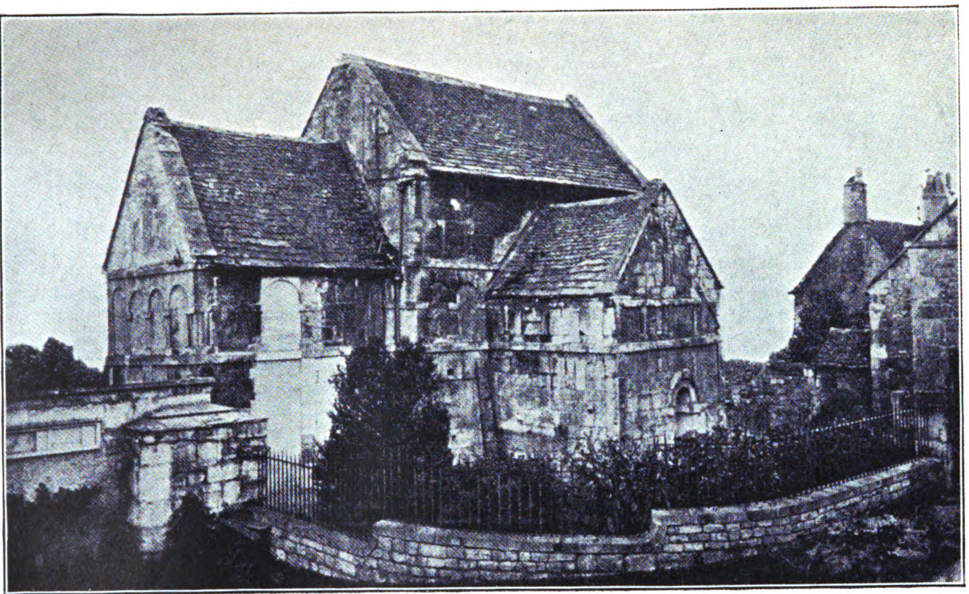

I. SAXON CHURCH AT BRADFORD-ON-AVON

To face p. 112

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Bradford (on Avon) were mere empty names. Whether the disappearance of such important buildings was due to the insane violence of the Danes or to the rapacious guzzlings of the English, he could not ascertain. Malmesbury alone remained, still flourishing, full of inmates, with beautiful buildings. That it had escaped such great dangers, and retained some shadow of its liberties long ago lost, was due, he believed, to the holiness of Aldhelm. Much of his endowment was lost, some of it so completely that even the recollection of it was gone. The charter of Leutherius, already referred to, had been very stringent against alienation. He had granted the land called Maldumsburg to Aldhelm and his successors, and had specifically declared that no succeeding bishop or king should venture to tamper with this grant, on the not unlikely ground that the property appeared to have been abstracted and sequestered from the rights of the episcopal power. Bishop Leutherius desired the fact to be known, and to be quoted against gainsayers, that he had much more added to the advantage and increase of the pontifical church than taken away from it violently. And, to make doubly safe, he required the abbats, who had peti-

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tioned him to make the grant, to subscribe the document with their own hands. The grant was made in public, near the river Bladon, on August 26, 675.

Aldhelm was now an abbat, Malmesbury an abbey. The evident favour of the bishop, and the energy of Aldhelm, caused rapid growth in the endowments. Men flocked to Aldhelm, some for his learning, some for his piety. On his learned side he was complex, manifold; but on the religious side of his character and work he was affable and simple. The kings and earls, princes and nobles, of the Mercians and West Saxons, made many gifts to the abbey, to benefit the stipends of the monks and the health of their own souls.

The farms thus added to the possessions of the abbey by the blessed father were charmingly situated, delightfully spacious, and conveniently placed. A man leaving the monastery at dawn could easily walk round the whole and get back in full daylight. After his death gifts of land still came in, but all had been stolen before William's time, as well as parts of those added by Aldhelm. The saint raised the estates from scarce sixty *cassati* to more than four hundred. The original sixty, it would appear, were the lands

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comprised in the charter of Leutherius; they lay in the township appended to the place on which the monastery stood, commonly called by the rustics in William's time Brockeneberg.

To any one who knows the locality, the names of places mentioned in the charters are for the most part clear enough. We still have Corston, Rodborne, Brokenborough, Braden forest, the Avon, the Wiley, Kemble, Crudwell, Charlton, Purton, Burford, Somerford, the Thames, Newnton, Wootton. The statement that a man could walk round the whole easily in one day excludes, among other portions, the Wiley of to-day; but there are good reasons for thinking that the gift of the land and fishery, "where the Avon and the Wiley meet," did not take effect, or that an exchange was made very soon after the gift. The *cassati* were cottagers, each with a piece of land sufficient to maintain one family. The *manentes* named in the charters were persons who remained on the land; that is, could not leave without the permission of the owner of the land.

The chief seat of the onastery, as he has said before, William remarks, was in the church of St. Peter. This is a valuable example of the manner in which the usual joint

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dedication to St. Peter and St. Paul came by colloquial use to be regarded as a dedication to St. Peter alone. It was probably a curt use of this title on one occasion by Bede, in connection with the Abbey Church of Canterbury, which laid the trap so fatal to all of the Roman Catholic bishops in England when they put forth their strange and historic though unhistorical document about the dedication of England to St. Peter. William's previous statement, to which he refers, was that Aldhelm built a more august church in honour of the Saviour and the first apostles, Peter and Paul, and that in this church was the head or chief place of the monastery. Aldhelm did not rest from building churches. Within the precincts of the monastery he set to work to build another church, in honour of Mary the mother of God. This he built; and contiguous to it yet another, in honour of St. Michael, the remains of which William saw, for the whole fabric of the larger church remained unimpaired in his time, excelling in beauty and magnitude every church of the early period then still existing in England. Mr. Freeman, we may here note, declared that Aldhelm's two churches of Malmesbury and Sherborne were the only Anglo-Saxon churches

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of importance which were spared for some time by the Norman architects, a statement which may to some extent be called in question as too sweeping. We ought also to note that, so far as we can judge, the determination of the monks to build the great Norman abbey church at Malmesbury, of which we have the nave now as the parish church, must have been taken some time before William's death, and it is difficult to believe that the present church had not already been begun. But he does not make the faintest reference to the subject. It is not impossible that he disapproved of the removal of Aldhelm's fine church, and was unwilling to record the breach of the continuity on which he evidently set store.

The new church, of which the nave still remains to us, six of its bays forming the present parish church, the other three being ruined, must have displaced some of the smaller churches, its size being very considerable. Before it was built, there was a group of churches on the hill of Malmesbury almost equalling the seven churches of Irish groups. They were six—St. Andrew, St. Laurence, St. Mary, St. Michael, St. Peter and St. Paul, and the old Basilica.

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CHAPTER V

Aldhelm's manner of life.—His visit to Rome.—Delay at Wareham.—Miracles at the church which he built.—The site of the church.—Miracles in Rome: the chasuble, the speaking infant.—The marble altar.—Treasures of Christian Art lost by Wessex.

ALDHELM'S manner of life as a monk had been handed down to William's time as a life of much reading, of perpetual prayer. In one of his letters he said of himself that as he read he heard God speaking, as he prayed he spoke to God. He ate as little as possible, and never went beyond the bounds of the monastery unless obliged to do so. He was not at all desirous of money; if any one gave it, he at once spent it on some good purpose. We do not find that he made discrimination between the gifts of worthy persons and unworthy. The Apostolic Constitutions had advised that if a bad man gave you money you should buy fuel with it, for then you burned it. To keep down the bodily passions, he would stand up to the shoulder in the fountain near

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the monastery, caring neither for the icy cold of winter nor for the exhalations from the marshes in summer, passing the night without offence. Thus he stood till he had sung through the whole Psalter. That fountain retained the saint's name; in William's time the water bubbled up gently, was fair to look upon, pleasant to the taste. However fair and pleasant the water to the eye and to the palate, we need not greatly wonder that Aldhelm wrote to Hadrian of his wasting limbs being parched to the marrow. In another part of the town Daniel's fountain was shown, in which Daniel, who received the mitre at the same time with Aldhelm, and himself, too, had been a monk of Malmesbury, to which place he retired to end his days, used to pass the watches of the night. Tradition said that Aldhelm was so sure of his conquest of the flesh that he did not avoid—nay, rather markedly the contrary—temptations from which others ran away as the only safe course; and added that it was great grief to the evil spirit to see himself thus openly derided. William considers that the truth of this tradition is proved by Aldhelm's treatise on Virginity, for it was impossible that such a man did otherwise than

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as he taught, lived otherwise than as he said. To others he gave advice contrary to his own dangerous practice, as for instance to Wihtfrith, whom in a letter he warned against reading suggestive poems, consorting with doubtful women, wearing effeminate dress. Wihtfrith had gone to Ireland to study, and he warns him on two or three special points. First, he would have him read the holy Scriptures and not the inventions of the philosophers; it was a folly to pass by the limpid springs of crystal fountains, and drink thirstily from marshes where the black toads swarmed and frogs croaked. Other points were that he should leave severely alone the unchaste stories of the heathen poets and the temptations of loose company; should avoid the rich dwellings of patricians and praetors; should avoid, as a protection against the colds of the north, the garments dyed in purple; rather should he prefer the humble cottage, and the graceful cassock with common fur. The fountains named can still be seen.

Having completed the buildings and largely increased the endowments of Malmesbury, Aldhelm, William tells us, determined to go to Rome, chiefly that he might protect his monastery from ill-treatment by successors

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of Leutherius, the Bishop of Wessex. The whole story has a legendary sound; but we have evidence of the fact of his visit from the letter quoted on page 260. He communicated his intention to his friends and patrons, Ina, King of the West Saxons, and Ethelred, King of the Mercians, and they raised no objections. Here we see another evidence of the border character of Malmesbury, and its relations with both of the kingdoms and kings. On his way he visited his estate in Dorset, near Werham (Wareham), where Corfe Castle stands out over the sea. Here he built a church, two miles from the sea, while his companions were making their preparations and he was waiting for a favouring gale; in this church he prayed for a safe journey out and a safe return. The walls stood, in William's time, without a roof, except that the altar was protected by something which projected over it. However heavy a rain was falling all round, not one drop ever fell within the walls. The shepherds regarded this not as a miracle, but as a common occurrence; they always fled to the place in heavy rains and stood within the walls in the dry, with no roof. Not to believe that, William says, in his time, was great want of modesty, for

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the evidence was overwhelming. The great men of the province had often tried to roof it in, out of respect for the saint, but they did not succeed; thus they understood that the saint preferred to keep the miracle alive, for it led to the presence of great crowds on the days of his feast, greater even than those which came to Malmesbury, where his bones were.

In one place of his general narrative, William speaks his mind very freely on disbelief in mediaeval miracles. He is writing of Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, who laboured against the slave trade in Bristol, and of the miracles performed at his tomb. "Our modern unbelief," he says, "which dresses itself up as caution, will not give credence to miracles, even though the eye see them and the finger can be laid upon them. I have feared to be guilty of silence by neglecting to report events known to upright authors."

We must see at greater length the remarks with which he prefaces his recital of some of Aldhelm's miracles. He warns his readers that whereas he has in the other parts of his Life of Aldhelm brought contemporary documents to prove the accuracy of what he has written, he cannot do so here. But he states

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that he will describe no miracles but such as are universally believed, on the strength of unbroken oral tradition, kept alive, he believes, by the Holy Spirit. And if he is called in question because he reports occurrences heard of and not seen by him, he begs his accusers to lay the same charge against Luke in the Gospel, against Gregory in the Dialogue. Why should he be condemned for doing in a small matter what they did in a great? Besides, was there not the evidence of the saint's shrine, on which these very miracles were in ancient times depicted? It remained to his day, and it was evidence that these stories were current and were accepted as fact by Aldhelm's own times. I need scarcely say that the confident belief in the continuance of a miraculous power is one of the most difficult phenomena of the early Middle Ages. We shall see a little further on a striking example of it.

The mention of a church built by Aldhelm near Wareham raises some interesting local questions, a few words on which will not be out of place here. The exact words of William are as follows:—"Locus est in Dorsatensi pago, ii milibus a mari disparatus, juxta Werham, ubi et Corf castellum pelago

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prominet:" "The place is in Dorset, two miles off the sea, near Wareham, where also Corfe Castle stands up over the sea." With this must be compared William's statement about the place of burial of the murdered King Edward, "Apud Werham fuit, quod non longe a loco in quo occisus fuit, qui Corf vocatur, imminet mari:" "It was at Wareham, which stands upon the sea, not far from the place of the murder, called Corfe." It should be noted that the words "where Corfe Castle stands up over the sea" are added in the margin of the first draft of the History, but added in William's own hand. This appears to show that William had made further enquiry, possibly in person, in order to determine the exact place at which the walls still stood. The difference of the verbs used for the relation of the two places to the sea is an indication of clear local knowledge. If this surmise is correct, it will take a great deal of local topography to defeat the argument that the church was actually at Corfe Castle. The statement that it was two miles distant from the sea cannot be very closely pressed, for the levels have altered not inconsiderably since that time, and it is difficult to say how much of the low ground at the head of Poole

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harbour was covered by the sea twelve hundred years ago. On this point, the other passage quoted about Wareham gives useful help. Swanage Bay, too, may have been preferred as the nearest point of the sea, on the ground that a marshy estuary or head of a sea loch almost completely shut in by sandbanks scarcely deserved the name of sea. Thus even if we disregard the change of level, which we certainly cannot safely do, there is not anything really definite in the "two miles distant from the sea," even when the further limitation "near Wareham" is taken into account.

The important headland west of Swanage known as St. Alban's Head has lost its proper designation of St. Aldhelm's Head because St. Alban was so much better known than St. Aldhelm, and if the vowel of the initial syllable is pronounced in the same way the two words are quite sufficiently alike for the mistake to have arisen.

On St. Aldhelm's Head, then, to give it its proper name, a very interesting little chapel stands, called St. Aldhelm's Chapel. It cannot be the church in question, for it is not many yards from the sea; besides, its foundation was a good deal later than Aldhelm's

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time. This chapel is well worth a careful description, but as we have to rule it out of court, a description would not be in place.

About two miles from the sea at this point is the church of Worth Matravers. It is no doubt a Saxon building, and very interesting. It is built of the flat stones which lie on the surface in all that part of the country, a land of small stone quarries worked by a guild of hereditary masons. Its dedication is to All Saints, in itself confirmatory evidence that it comes from Saxon times. But it does not fulfil the condition "where Corfe Castle stands up over the sea," except in a sense which would render William's addition of those words unmeaning.

In Wareham itself there is a church dedicated to St. Martin. It stands on the top of the high scarped face which looks like an earthwork, and without doubt served that purpose at a time when the other sides of Wareham had as their defence raised earthworks. As all who have visited Wareham know, the modern town is entirely confined within the old lines of defence. This church of St. Martin very closely resembles Aldhelm's "little church" at Bradford on Avon; indeed so closely, that accidental coincidence is out

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of the question. The dimensions, ground-plan, and details are strikingly similar. The church has been a good deal knocked about, and the north side has been completely altered; but the south side and the south transept remain much as they were. An illustration of the "little church" at Bradford on Avon will be found opposite page 112. It is, however, out of the question to identify St. Martin's, Wareham, with a church described as near Wareham, and as at the place where Corfe Castle stands up over the sea. And there is the fatal difficulty that the roof of St. Martin's Church was certainly on in William's time, and always has been on.

There remains, so far as we can see, only Corfe Castle itself. And here we have a great wall of Saxon herring-bone work of unrivalled dimensions and excellence, with early romanesque windows at regular intervals. The illustration opposite page 128 shows a portion of this wall other than that in which the curious romanesque window-openings still remain intact. It has been incorporated in the defences of that most remarkable of fortresses by having a strong face of stone wall added on its outer side, more than doubling its thickness. It must have been preserved for some very

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special reason, for a more perfect work would have been produced if it had been pulled down and a solid wall of the required thickness built in its place. It has no roof, and no sign of any, and its incorporation in the main wall of defence appears to show that it had no roof when that work was done. The opposite wall, and the ends, have disappeared so completely that we cannot safely suppose that the original building was used as the chapel of the castle, even in the earliest times. It probably stood clear at the top of the remarkable hill, which was no doubt only fortified originally at its lower parts, and its reputation was so great that the wall was preserved through Norman and Early English times. The kindness of the Rector of Corfe, Mr. de Kilpeck, an old pupil of mine, enables me to give a representation of this wall. Here it was, so far as we can now judge, that Aldhelm's church was built while he was waiting for a favouring gale.

It should be added that not a trace could be found last year of a tradition in any of the localities mentioned, of difficulty about roofing a church or chapel in ancient times.

Aldhelm arrived at Rome, and abode with the Pope, Sergius I, in the Lateran. He

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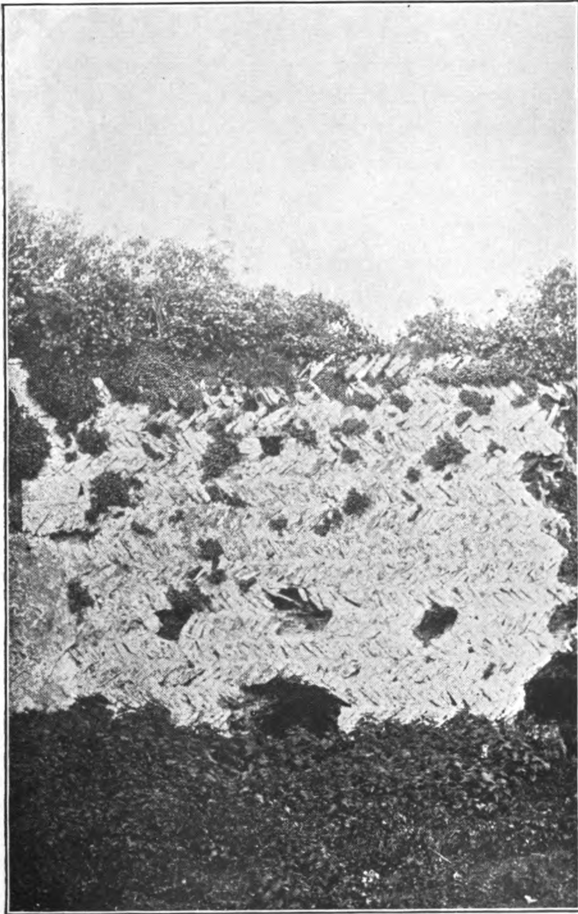

2. SAXON WALL, CORFE CASTLE

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celebrated Mass every day, thus relieving the tedium of life in foreign parts and commending himself and his companions to God.

One day he had sung the Mass, in accordance with his daily custom; and in taking off his vestment (William of Malmesbury says, somewhat to my surprise, "the garment which they call a chasuble;" it would have seemed natural at that date to say "in taking off his chasuble"), thinking that the attendant was ready, he threw it off behind his back. The minister, however, was attending to something at another part of the altar, and was not there to receive the chasuble as it went back over Aldhelm's head. There was no one and nothing to catch it. But lo! a ray of the sun, shining clear through the transparent glass of a window, caught the chasuble and held it miraculously suspended in the empty air. "Now this vestment," William adds, "whether he had taken it with him from England or had only procured it for the occasion we do not know, is with us still." He finished this work, the *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum,* in 1125. "It is of most delicate material," he continues, "dyed scarlet; and has black scrolls containing the representations of peacocks." Its length showed

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that the saint was a tall man, and would naturally increase the difficulty of throwing it over his head. Here we have the birds in scrolls of which we see so much on Anglian sculptured stones of the early ages of Christianity in this island.

We now come to a curious story which in more ways than one illustrates the rudeness and the beliefs of the time. While Aldhelm was staying in Rome, a child was born in the house of the pope's chamberlain. The report spread that the mother was a nun; and public clamour declared that the father was the pope, for they were said to have been much together. Sergius, who was pope from 687 to 701, had only been confirmed in the papacy by the lay exarch of Ravenna after a great struggle, in which he defeated the claims of two rivals, after payment of a large sum of money for the decision in his favour. There was, therefore, a party against him, and the fact that he was of a Syrian family settled in Sicily would render him unpopular with some at least of the Romans. It is rather curious that he should have been charged with this particular kind of offence, for he was the pope who scornfully rejected the canon of the Quinisext Council which asserted the per-

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mission of Scripture in favour of married clergy. It was in consequence of this rejection that the emperor gave orders for his apprehension and transportation to Constantinople, an order which he successfully resisted by force.

Aldhelm took to heart the insult of this charge against the pope. He set to work to argue the matter with the Romans, urging upon them three points, which do not appear to the modern mind very strong. First, it was a wretchedly base thing to suspect their own pontiff of crimes. Next, what influence could the Roman pontiff have with the Britons and other nations across the seas, if he was attacked by his own citizens? Lastly, it did not seem likely, it could not be true, that one who remembered that he was set over the whole world would entangle himself in such a sin as this. It seems, we may remark, impossible that William could have known the history of the popes during the tenth and eleventh centuries, and yet recorded any one of these arguments. Aldhelm found that he was speaking to the winds; the popular tumult had gone too far to be easily appeased. He therefore took a more decided step. "Bring hither the infant, that out of his own mouth

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he may repel this charge against the pontiff." This was received with laughter, in which we modern sceptics join. The child, however, now only nine days old, was brought to Aldhelm, was baptized by him, and was asked, was public opinion right about its father? The infant settled the matter in a clear voice. Sergius, the infant voice informed our Wiltshire saint, was holy and undefiled, and always had been. Rome burst into triumph over Aldhelm's merits; the cheers and shouts of joy shook the very stars.

That is William's preface to a Bull of Pope Sergius, in which he granted to Aldhelm all his requests on behalf of his monasteries. They were exempted from episcopal intervention; no one was to set up an episcopal see there, nor was any bishop to say Mass there except on invitation; if they needed a priest or a deacon, the neighbouring bishop was to ordain him without any but the essential conditions. If an abbat died, the monks were to elect his successor and the neighbouring bishop was to recognize him. This charter of privileges was brought back to England by Aldhelm, and here was signed by the hand of Ethelred the Mercian king, and Ina the West Saxon king; and they agreed that if

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war fell out between the two nations, the abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul at Malmesbury should always be left in peace. This was evidently a great privilege, for the boundary of the two realms was not at all clear, and certainly came perilously near to the abbey. A border place, with a considerable reputation for wealth, was liable to pillage from either side.

Another example may here be given of the link which Aldhelm formed between the art of Italy and the infant art of the Church of the West Saxons.

When Aldhelm returned from Italy, he brought with him a white marble altar, a fair piece of stone, 4 ft. long, 2¼ ft. broad, 1½ ft. thick, with a projecting rim, beautifully wrought all round with crosses. The animal which was carrying it up the Alps—which must have been a camel, William thinks, for no beast of our regions could carry such a weight—the animal fell, and broke the marble slab in two. Aldhelm, it is unnecessary to say, infused vigour into the animal, so that it picked itself up again, and he miraculously mended the altar, leaving only an irregular mark or cicatrice where the fracture had been. Aldhelm eventually got the altar

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safe back to England, and gave it to Ina, King of the West Saxons, who bestowed it upon the church of St. Mary at Bruton in Somerset, where it was still to be seen in William's days, a lively proof, as he says, of the holiness of Aldhelm. I suppose there was an irregular seam in the marble, as to the origin of which this story was told.

As to the weight which the camel would have to carry, you will see that the dimensions I have given, 4 ft. by $2\frac{1}{4}$ ft. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft., mean $13\frac{1}{2}$ cubic feet. I asked a practical friend how many cubic feet of marble go to a ton, and he replied, "of statuary marble, $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet." So the altar weighed just a ton.

In connection with the question of early Christian art in Wessex, we may remark that we only by accident missed the chance of being the most prominent of the races of the Heptarchy in that respect. It was to Benedict Biscop that Northumbria owed its early pre-eminence, more than to any one else or than to all others put together. He it was who built the churches of St. Peter, St. Mary, St. Paul, at Wearmouth and Jarrow. He it was who brought the noble manuscripts from Italy which formed the unrivalled library of Wearmouth: one of them is now one of the

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greatest pandects or codices of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament still in existence, the famous Codex Amiatinus in the Laurenziana at Florence, with the inscription of Abbat Ceolfrid, of Aldhelm's time, presenting it to the pope. He it was who brought over large collections of pictures for the adornment of his three churches, pictures of the Virgin Mary, the twelve Apostles, the typès of the Old Testament and the antitypes of the New, the scenes of the Gospel and the scenes of the Last Judgement. Those were for two of his churches. Then we have other pictures not described, in number sufficient to go completely round the remaining one of the three churches.

This Benedict, a Northumbrian by birth, and an officer of the Northumbrian king Oswy, had made more than one journey to Rome when the pope selected him as the fittest companion for the new Archbishop Theodore in 668. In 669 he took charge of the monastery at Canterbury, and taught as head of its school for two years, till the Abbat Hadrian came and took charge; under whom Aldhelm, as we have seen, studied. Benedict was thus set free, and he went again to Rome specially to collect ecclesiastical treasures.

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He had friends also in the south of Gaul who purchased things for him, and he came home by way of Vienne on the Rhone to pick up what they collected. Loaded with his treasures he came to Wessex, intending to settle at the court of Kenwalch, the West Saxon king, who had more than once shown his friendship and done him services. No doubt Wessex, and not Northumbria, would have been the recipient of his treasures, and Malmesbury was the place of education most prominent in the king's mind. Malmesbury, not Wearmouth, would have been the pioneer of ecclesiastical art, the place of abode of the great library. Unfortunately, when Benedict reached Wessex, King Kenwalch had just died, in the year 672. His widow, Sexburga, ruled for a year or more after his death, a unique example of woman's rule in the land up to that time. Benedict's disappointment at the death of his royal friend drove him away from Wessex, and he passed up with his treasures to his native Northumbria. There, too, his patron Oswy was dead, and Ecgfrith his son was reigning. Ecgfrith examined his volumes and codices and relics and other treasures, and was so much delighted with them that he gave him seventy

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hides of land of his own estates, and bade him build a monastery, and then another. This was a year or two before Malmesbury was made an abbey and Aldhelm was made abbat. Knowing what we do know of the great interest taken by Alfred and his family in all artistic work, we can imagine to what heights art would have been carried by them if this mighty nucleus of art treasures had been deposited in the West Saxon realm.

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CHAPTER VI

Aldhelm's election and consecration as bishop.—His miracle of the book.—His concessions to his monasteries. —His hard work in his diocese.—His death and burial.— The crosses erected at the places where his body rested. —Some account of Saxon sculptured stones still remaining in those parts.

AT the beginning of the eighth century, Aldhelm had reached the years bordering on old age, so William tells us, again pointing conclusively to the earlier of the dates which have been given for his birth. When a year or two more had passed, Hedda, the pontiff of all West Saxony, with his see at Winton, died. The death was most acceptable to the heavenly beings, because it added a saint to their number; but it was a great loss to mortals, because it was next to impossible to find any one who could govern that great diocese. The territory, which had four bishops in William's time, had only one to curb it then; only one man to coerce the rebel, to comfort the suppliant. That was William's view of the necessary work of a diocesan bishop, and

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of the two attitudes of his flock. By a synodal council the unwieldy diocese was divided into two sees, the one of Sherborne, the other of Winton. The division was unequal, for the one see had only two *pagi*, the other had the whole of the rest of the vast West Saxon realm. The prelates selected were natives of their respective districts. The see of Sherborne, which comprised Berkshire, Wilts, Dorset, and part or even the whole of Somerset, if not still more of the south-west, fell to Aldhelm; the two *pagi* of Hants and Surrey alone went to the other bishop, Daniel.

Aldhelm resisted his appointment as long as he could. He pressed every point which could tend towards passing him over, every point which might tend towards dividing the supporters of his election. But he laboured in vain, being refuted by his own argument. His great point was his age, probably about sixty-five, quite young in these days. He was, he declared, at an age for retirement from work to learned leisure, not for entering upon business of great anxieties. The reply was prompt: the more mature he was, the freer from vices, the readier in counsel. And though his hair was white, his eyes were sparkling still. He gave way at last. The

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bishops received him as their colleague, the clerics as their father, the laics as their protector. By universal acclaim, with no dissentient, he was taken to Berhtwald, the archbishop of the chief see, to be consecrated. The archbishop was greatly pleased by the election of one so closely bound to him by the ties of study and of the religious life. He detained him for a long visit, and lightened the burdens of the details of the archiepiscopate by discussing principles with him.

While he was at Canterbury, he went down to the coast at Dover (twelve miles off, William says), hearing that ships had come there. The harbour there was much disturbed by storms. The passage from France was the shortest of all, being only a few miles long. It resulted from this narrowness of the channel that the currents of the sea clashed with one another, and the waves became angry on the slightest provocation. Thus, just where people expected the safest crossing, they ran the greatest risk. This preface, William explains, leads naturally to the story he has to relate. The saint was walking on the sea-shore. He examined closely the wares of the merchant sailors, to see if they had anything which would serve ecclesiastical

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purposes, for they had brought a quantity of books. Seeing a book containing the whole of the Old and the New Testament, he desired to buy it, and did not look at the other things. He turned over the leaves in a knowing way, and beat down the price. The barbarians, with the insolence of sailors, attacked him with abuse. "Why should he depreciate other people's property, and lower the value of things not his? Let him, if he liked, blow upon his own property, and leave the property of others at its true value." The saint only laughed at their impudence. When they found he would not give their price, they rowed off from the shore. But divine vengeance quickly punished their insult to the saint. A storm springs up. Dense clouds turn day into night. The fury of the winds, the creaking of the oars, increase the terror. The mast cannot withstand the violence of the tempest. The ship trembles under the blows of the waves. The art of the rowers, the skill of the sailors, all are of no use. They are going to destruction; all the elements appear to have conspired for the death of the wretches. But at length it dawns upon even their dull minds that this is the penalty for their treatment of the

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saint. They send forth a wail of distress, stretch out their clasped hands to the shore. They pray for help; they vow amendment. It was an easy thing for the blessed pontiff to forgive the offence, which had not caused him any grief. He made the sign of the cross, and the storm at once began to abate its violence. The tempest grew calm. The wind changed, and helped the ship to the shore; the waves which had threatened death became subservient. The sailors got safe on to the sands, and pressed the book upon the saint. Wouldn't he take it for nothing? Wouldn't he deign to accept the gift of his servants, whom he had rescued from the very jaws of death? He gave them a price halfway between his and theirs, that he might not inflict a heavy loss upon them, and yet might not reject their prayers. The volume, William says, is still to be seen at Malmesbury (Meldun), a venerable specimen of antiquity.

The new bishop had his episcopal seat at Sherborne, and there he built, in a wonderful manner, a church which William had himself visited, showing that it, as well as St. Mary's at Malmesbury (afterwards called St. Aldhelm's), was spared by the Norman archi-

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tects[1]. He then proposed to appoint abbats to his three abbeys, in succession to himself. The monks, however, interposed objections: they were so enamoured of his gentle rule, that so long as he lived they would have none other to rule over them. We may, perhaps, read between the lines the determination of the monks to prevent so awkward a precedent as that of the first bishop of the new see appointing abbats to the abbeys in the diocese. For that would be the appearance which the transaction would have constitutionally, although it might be quite true that, in fact, it was in each case only the Abbat Aldhelm designating his successor on the occasion of his resignation. He set forth the whole affair in a document promulgated at the monastery founded by Cuthburg, sister of King Ina, near the river called Winburna, a place which we know as Wimborne. King Ina and Aldhelm's brother-bishop, Daniel, subscribed the document, which Aldhelm had previously confirmed with the sign of the sacred cross. It was afterwards ratified at a sacrosanct council held near the river Noodr, that is, at Adderbourne on the Nadder, in Wilts. In this

[1] One of the Saxon doorways of this church is still to be seen in the north aisle. It is of Bradford stone.

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document Aldhelm recites the prayer with which the monks concluded their affectionate resolution to have him as their abbat so long as he should live. "This with suppliant prayer and common request we pray, that thou wilt make firm, under witness of the holy Scriptures and the clear consent of men of authority, that after thy death neither royal boldness, nor episcopal authority, nor any man of ecclesiastical or secular dignity, shall claim headship over us contrary to our own free will." To this Aldhelm agreed, and this it was that he confirmed by document. In addition to Ina and Daniel, Ethelfrith the patrician subscribed the charter. The date was 705; the monasteries were recited as Maldubesburg, Froom, and Bradanford. It is clear that the derivation of the first of these names was still from Maildubh.

We see in this recitation of the prayer of the monks that general attention had already been called to the dangers attendant upon the succession to abbacies. Nearly twenty years before this we have the very strong remarks of Easterwine, joint-abbat of Wearmouth, on this subject. He was the nephew of Benedict Biscop, the founder, and was of noble kin. When he was dying, in 686, he

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gave solemn charge to his monks about the choice of a successor. They were not to give heed to high birth, but were to be guided in their choice of a ruler by the probity of life and of doctrine of the man whom they should choose. In particular he warned them against disregarding such grounds of choice in order to keep the abbacy in his family, a danger which it is evident that he felt to be not remote. "I tell you of a truth, that if it were a choice between two evils, it would be much more tolerable to me that the whole of this place, in which I have made a monastery, should if God so willed it become for ever a desert, than that my own brother after the flesh, whom we know not to walk in the way of truth, should succeed me in its government as abbat. Take ye therefore, my brethren, great care that you never choose for yourselves a father on account of his birth, nor yet from outside your own body; but according to the rule of the great Abbat Benedict, and according to the privilege of our own monastery, elect from your body him who in virtue of life and wisdom of doctrine is judged most worthy, and invite the bishop to confirm the appointment with the customary benediction."

Twenty years after Aldhelm's death, Bede

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gave a terrible account of the evils of the monastic system, in his letter to Ecgbert, the Archbishop of York. "It is a disgraceful thing to have to say, that persons who know nothing at all of the monastic life have received under the name of monasteries so many estates that there is no land left for grants to the sons of nobles or of soldiers who have served their time; and thus they have nothing to do, and being not married though of marriageable age they live dissolute lives, and either leave their country, for which they ought to fight, and go beyond the seas, or live at home the slaves of wantonness and lust, not abstaining even from the virgins consecrated to God. A graver scandal still is committed. Laymen give money to the kings, and under pretext of founding monasteries procure territories on which they may be free to indulge their lusts; and by royal edict they acquire for these possessions hereditary tenure, and get the documents ratified by the subscription of bishops, abbats, and secular authorities. They fill their so-called monasteries with monks driven out of true monasteries for disobedience, or any whom they can find wandering about, or such of their own followers as they can persuade to be ton-

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sured. Here they devote themselves to the care of their wives and the procreation of children. They go further, and obtain lands for their wives to erect monasteries and though lay women to rule over handmaids of Christ. The proverb in use among the common people is true of them, 'wasps can make combs, but they store up not honey but poison.' So it has come about that for about thirty years, that is, since King Aldfrith was removed from human affairs, our province has gone mad with this insane error, and there has scarcely been one prefect who has not during his time of office furnished himself with a monastery of this kind, and dragged his wife also into the unholy business, and the king's own ministers and attendants have done the same."

Of Aldhelm's work in his diocese, William has not much to say. He deals in general statements, and contents himself with the following summary description of the saint's diocesan labours.

"The pontiff pressed on with the business of the diocese with unwearied zeal, knowing that the end was near. The flesh, worn out with years, would have refused to carry out the labours he called upon it for, but his

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mind was firm and was already at the gates of heaven. He forced the feeble body to do what he would. He preached night and day. He went round the districts with much activity. He observed fasts, and other duties of that kind, as completely as in the time of vigour. Thus he led a life pleasing to men and to God, and finally passed up to the realms above."

After four years of most strenuous administration of his diocese—so, as we have seen, Bede describes his work as bishop—Aldhelm died, in the year 709, while visiting the village of Doulting in Somerset. Feeling that his death was near, he had himself carried into the wooden church, that there he might breathe his last, as the unbroken tradition of the village told in William's days. Ecguin, Bishop of Worcester (693–717), learned by a vision the death of his friend, and under the influence of grief and affection hastened to Doulting. Prayer having been offered for the repose of the soul, Ecguin ordered the body to be carried to Malmesbury, in accordance with the wish and instructions of the saint, and himself worked hard at the necessary preparations. The blessed remains were accompanied by crowds which went before

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and followed after, each striving to be as near as possible to the bier, at least to see it if they could not touch it. All were greatly soothed in their sorrow by the beauty of the lifeless corpse, its grace and shapeliness.

William tells us that stone crosses were set up along the route by which the body was taken from Doulting to Malmesbury, one each seven miles. He further quotes the words of Bishop Ecguin to the following effect:—

"Learning by revelation that the religious bishop Aldhelm had migrated to the Lord, I called together the brethren and attendants, and opened to them the departure of the ever to be venerated father. With all haste I reached the spot where the sacred body lay, about 50 miles beyond the monastery of Meldun. Thence I took it to the place of sepulture and buried it with all honour, ordering[1] the erection of the sign of the holy

[1] This is one of many evidences, some of which have already been noted, of the close inter-communion between Mercia and Wessex. It might have been supposed that the other of the West Saxon bishops would have performed these functions, especially as Daniel was himself a Malmesbury man. Bishop Ecguin of Worcester was of course Mercian. Ecclesiastical comity was already disregarding political divisions. We have here in embryo the unification of the kingdoms of the Heptarchy under the example of the Church of England.

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cross at each place where the body rested on the journey."

All the crosses, William adds, remained to his day, and not one of them showed signs of decay. They were called Biscopstane, Bishopstones. One was plainly to be seen in the monks' cloister at Malmesbury. We can only add, cloister and cross alike are gone.

Putting together the two facts that William says for himself that the crosses were placed each seven miles, and that he quotes Ecguin as saying that Doulting was about 50 miles from Malmesbury and that a cross was set up at each resting-place on the way, we must suppose that there were seven stages of the journey, each of about seven miles. The distance from Doulting to Malmesbury by the shortest way, as ways now are, is not nearly 50 miles, and we have to create for ourselves a circuitous route to account for that length of road. On the face of it we should say that they were sure to take the body to Frome and to Bradford on Avon, two of Aldhelm's own foundations as places of learning. Using this as a hint of the probable route, we find some interesting facts.

From Doulting to Frome is about seven miles. If they went thence to Bradford, the

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second day's journey was a good deal more than seven miles. It happens that Bishopstrow, so called from the bishop's tree, with a church dedicated to St. Aldhelm, is about seven miles east of Frome, beyond Warminster. At that village, more probably than at Stoke Orchard, the legendary event must be placed of Aldhelm's leaning on his ashen staff through so long a sermon that the staff took root and burgeoned with ash leaves in his hand. It seems not at all unlikely that they would go there to rest on the second night. But if they did, they would not get to Bradford on the third day, and some place which we cannot identify was their third resting-place; this would necessitate our cutting out one of the places still to be mentioned. At Bradford, which on this supposition was their fourth resting-place, we have still parts of a stone cross, certainly of the Anglo-Saxon period, and probably early in the period. At Bath, about the required distance from Bradford, we still have a part of an Anglo-Saxon cross of the same type as that at Bradford. At Colerne, which lies between Bath and Malmesbury, to the east of the Fosseway, we have two remarkable fragments of Anglo-Saxon crosses, more complicated in

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style than those already mentioned, with very fine lacertine ornamentation. At Littleton Drew, on the west of the Fosseway, and about seven or eight miles from Malmesbury, we have two fine sculptured stones, the one of which fits on to the top of the other, together forming the shaft of a cross, about six feet high, so that the whole cross was nearly or quite nine feet high. These portions of the shaft are mainly covered with vegetable ornament, but there is a skilful application of the interlacing ornament on one large panel; this again differs fundamentally from all the other crosses named. The stones at Littleton Drew are remarkable among early sculptured stones of the south-west in having the remains of an inscription. There is one very complete and fine A, of the same size and type as the Latin letters on the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire, which was probably erected nearly twenty-five years before Aldhelm's death. If the funeral procession went from Bath along the Fosseway and turned off to Colerne, and there rested; and next day joined the Fosseway again by the same road and moved up towards Malmesbury, turning off to Littleton Drew for the night; and next day moved from Littleton Drew to Malmesbury; we

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should have three stages of the required length from Bath to Malmesbury, with crosses or parts of crosses still remaining at all of the three supposed resting-places. But this makes one stage too many.

The only difficulty lies between Frome and Bradford. It is tempting to take them round by Bishopstrow and to find some place of rest between Bishopstrow and Bradford. If we do that, we must cut out Bath and take them from Bradford across to Colerne. It seems much more simple to take them from Frome to Westbury, where the dedication of the Church to All Saints speaks of Anglo-Saxon times, while the moated site known as the Palace Garden, and certain remains of Roman occupation, found from time to time, point to a residence of Anglo-Saxon kings and a selection of the place for residence in earlier times still. If we adopt this suggestion, the body rested on its way from Doulting to Malmesbury, and the stone crosses were set up, at Frome, Westbury, Bradford, Bath, Colerne, Littleton, and Malmesbury, thus making the journey in seven stages.

It is quite unnecessary to mention as a parallel case that of the Eleanor crosses which on the same principle King Edward set up

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at each place where the Queen's body rested on its way to Westminster. There are other indications of the survival of the feeling so strikingly illustrated by the case of Aldhelm. One such can be named in our own diocese. A public-house in the parish of St. George, in Bristol East, was named "Don John's Cross," from the cross set up—it is supposed—on the spot where the body of a Spanish grandee rested on its way from the place where he died to the ship which was to take the body from the Avon to his native land for burial.

It has been remarked above that we have remains of Saxon crosses at several of the sites mentioned as likely resting-places for Aldhelm's body on its long journey. The most numerous and the most beautiful of the remains of pre-Norman sculptured stones are found in the territories occupied by the Angles, notably the Northumbrian Angles; but there are considerable remains in the territories of the Middle Angles and Mercians. The West Saxons are supposed to have been much less given to the production of these finely wrought sepulchral monuments, or much less able to produce them. The south generally has been understood to lack the evidences of artistic culture in this material and style.

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But of late years evidence has appeared which has to some considerable extent modified that view so far as Wessex is concerned.

In 1891 a large collection of Saxon sculptured stones was found at Ramsbury in Wilts. Ramsbury became one of the seats of the Wiltshire bishopric in the year 909, when, in the language of the Anglo-Saxon lists written within a hundred years of the event, still in excellent preservation in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, the see of Sherborne, Aldhelm's own see, was divided into three *parrochiae*, Sherborne (for Dorset), Wells (for Somerset), and Crediton (for Devon and parts of Cornwall), while the see of Winton was divided into two *parrochiae*, Winton itself, which Frithestan held, and another which Æthelstan held. This latter was called variously, according to the place at which the bishop set his seat, the see of Ramsbury, of Wilton, and of Sunning. The first and the last of those names point to the union of Berks with Wilts to form this see.

Ramsbury, we must understand, was an important ecclesiastical place in itself, or it would not have been selected as the seat of the bishop of the newly formed diocese. During recent restorations at Ramsbury, they

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discovered the foundations of a pre-Norman church running parallel to the chancel wall of the present (thirteenth-century) church, and about three feet outside it. In immediate contiguity with these foundations two fine sculptured stones were dug up, and three were found near the same spot, in the external south-east angle of the present church. The several stones have fine patterns of interlacements, well executed. They are beautifully fresh and clear and white, as white as the whitest Bath stone of to-day. They are in fact of Bradford stone, which weathers white. Two of them are body-stones, and the others are shafts of the accompanying crosses. The diagram of the pattern on one side of one of the shafts, given in figure 3, shows that in the case of this monument the ornamentation was lacertine, or dragonesque, unlike the other of the two monuments. The voids in the dragon's convolutions are not due to decay, of which there is no sign; they are due to the fact that the stone had been at some time broken into several pieces, and at the fractures the raised work has been destroyed. Enough is left to show that the convolutions of one serpent formed the whole pattern, and for one conversant with this kind of work it would be

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easy to complete the pattern and show the creature's tail coming to its appointed end. We know that at Glastonbury Abbat Tica was buried at the right of the high altar, with a tomb, "not ignoble in the art of its sculpture;" and Odo at Canterbury was buried

FIG. 3. Ramsbury.

on the south side of the altar with a "pyramid" over his tomb; Odo, it may be remarked, had been bishop of Ramsbury. The Ramsbury monuments, each consisting of a body stone with a shaft or pyramid with a cross-

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head, probably stood at the north and south sides of the pre-Norman altar, and were turned out in a broken condition after some great devastation.

The dragonesque ornament of the shafts of crosses had in early times a certain vogue among the West Saxons in Wilts and the men of the British parts of Somerset and Devon. It is worthy of notice that the dragon was the emblem both of Wessex and of the Britons to the West of Wilts; we all of us remember the dragon standard on the Bayeux tapestry, in the scene where Harold's death is shown. The legends of great encounters with dragons not improbably point to fights with one or other of these peoples; and a legend in Somerset of a savage struggle between two dragons may very probably refer to the tug of war when dragon of Bret met West Saxon dragon.

There is at Rowberrow in Somerset, near Axbridge, one panel of the shaft of a cross, the whole of the pattern on which is formed, as at Ramsbury, of one creature of the serpent kind. It is shown in figure 4. The interlacements follow the invariable rule of "alternately under and over," but they are not specially skilful. In the north we should call them poor. The tail of the creature ought

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4. ROWBERROW

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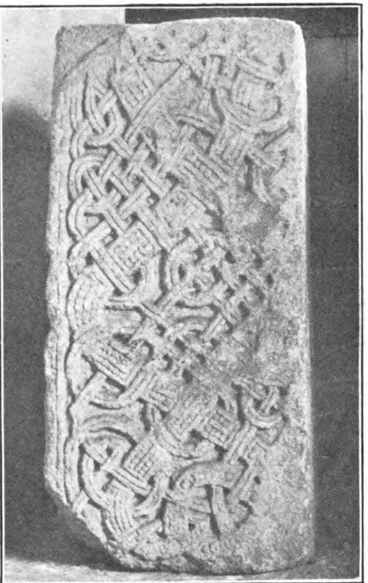
5. WEST CAMEL



6. WEST CAMEL

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by rights to end in its mouth, so that the circuit would be complete; it ends, as will be seen, about the middle of the left side of the figure. In two cases the photograph misleads the eye into seeing a flaw which does not exist.

The two sides of the shaft of a cross at West Camel in Somerset, to the north of Sherborne in Dorset, shown in figures 5 and 6, have their patterns formed of two dragons. The side shown in figure 6 is a fine example of lacertine work. On the other face the heads and mouths and eyes of the two dragons are seen. Above these the face of the cross is divided into two panels by a horizontal bar, and above the bar, in the upper panel, is a pattern of interlacing bands springing as offshoots from a central stem. This combination of the ideas of foliage ornament and interlacing bands is very far from common: my discovery of the Saxon patterns at Littleton Drew, to be described later on, affords the most striking example known to me.

At Dolton, in North Devon, a great shaft of a cross covered with strikingly good work has been cut into two lengths, and the upper half has been turned upside-down and hollowed out for a font. The tapering of the

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shaft shows that a portion has been lost in the process, and the patterns show that if the two pieces are portions of the same shaft the lost portion included the horizontal bands which divided the faces into panels. Of the four faces of the upper part of the shaft, three are occupied by lacertine ornament, one of which is shown in figure 7. The dragons are eared creatures, with straight snout and puffed cheeks, not unlike the creature at Rowberrow, but more like the mask of a fox. Inasmuch as the interlacing bands in which they are involved do not pass into their mouths as tails, we may understand that the pattern is all formed of one band, swelling out towards its ends into the bodies and heads of these dragons, as the bands which form the pattern in the lower face swell out into necks and heads; though in that case, as will be seen, each creature has the end of a tail in its jaws, probably the tail of the other creature. There are many reasons for thinking that these two fragments are parts of different cross-shafts. If they belong to the same shaft, it was between five and six feet long. In any case we have both the bottom of a shaft and the top of a shaft, for the patterns in each case finish off completely at one end or the other.

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7. DOLTON

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8. GLOUCESTER

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The head of the cross would be socketed on to the upper piece above the heads of the dragons.

To pass to another kingdom and another people, though, as we have seen and shall see, closely connected with Malmesbury, figure 8 shows one side of the remarkable fragment of the shaft of a cross taken out of the wall of an alley in Gloucester in 1888. In the lower panel are two lacertine creatures fully displayed. They form a symmetrical pattern, for the triangular leaf in which the involving band ends at the upper left-hand corner, near the creature's left leg, will be found reproduced in a like position at the right-hand corner at the bottom. This shows also that we have very nearly the whole of this panel. The upper panel shows a great bird of prey, broken off at the neck, the lower part of its body involved in interlacing bands. The other faces have animals on them, similarly involved, with one exception where the pattern is, as at West Camel, a combination of the ideas of vegetable growth and interlacing bands.

The probable explanation of this lacertine decoration of the shafts of Christian crosses is that it is meant to represent the old serpent, defeated by the power of the Cross, and tied

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and bound by means of its own self. Where two such creatures are employed, the certain overthrow of Satan divided against himself may be symbolized. But, however true that may be, it is difficult to keep out of consideration the emblems of the West Saxons and the Britons, and to refuse to see any reference to them. It may indeed be possible to go further, and to question whether the dragons on the earliest sculptured stones were the cause or the effect of the dragon emblems and the dragon legends.

We are able to carry back the practice of erecting shafts for sepulchral monuments to a period so early as to leave no doubt that it was a recognized practice in Aldhelm's own time, and at a place in which he took special interest, namely, at Glastonbury. We are told by William that it was Aldhelm who persuaded his relative Ina, the King of the West Saxons, to build a large church there, and to restore the importance of the ecclesiastical establishment by rebuilding the monastery. This was at the beginning of Ina's reign, about the year 688.

We have an exceedingly interesting account of the ancient cemetery of Glastonbury from the pen of William of Malmesbury, and also

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an account of the tomb of Abbat Tica to which reference has already been made. This Abbat Tica had fled from Northumbria from the face of the Danes in 754, and he was said to have brought with him to Glastonbury the relics of many of the Northumbrian saints, Bishop Aidan, Hilda, five abbats of Wearmouth, and so on. When he died, as Abbat of Glastonbury, he was buried as we have seen on one side of the high altar, under the tomb described by William, who saw it there, as *arte caelaturae non ignobilis*, with an epitaph, which he read, setting forth that Tica's tomb was constructed with marvellous beauty. These phrases can only mean that there was very beautiful sculptured ornamentation on Tica's monument inside the church, and that would naturally lead us to suppose that Tica's companions lavished upon his tomb the skill in design and execution of arabesques and interlacements to which they had been trained in Northumbria. He and his knew well the beauties of St. Cuthbert's delicate cross; and Acca's two great crosses, the *duo cruces lapideae nobiliter insculptae*, one of which is still one of our noblest relics of the past; and the cross of Alchfrith at Bewcastle; and probably—though that was further afield—the cross at

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Ruthwell; and his surviving friends may have used some of the beautiful details of those works of art in decorating the tomb of their friend and master, and might thus have introduced into Wessex the art of ornamental sculpture in stone. But if that was so, it is too late by fifty years for our period. Fortunately, William does not leave us to the dilemma of that very natural argument. He goes on to say that in the cemetery outside King Arthur and his wife were buried between two "pyramids," and that King Kentwine was buried under one "pyramid," nobly sculptured, *nobiliter exculpta*, a phrase strikingly recalling Simeon of Durham's phrase of Acca's crosses, *nobiliter insculptae*, while Athelstan's boundary crosses at the limits of the sanctuary of Beverley, two hundred and fifty years later, were *mirabiliter insculptae*. Now Kentwine began his reign in the year which saw Aldhelm made Abbat of Malmesbury, and he died in 685. Here, then, we have the clearest evidence that beautiful surface ornament was sculptured on the pyramids, or obelisks, or shafts, placed at the head or, as in the case of Acca and of the "long man" at Penrith, at the head and feet of an important person's grave, in Aldhelm's own diocese, twenty years before he

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became its bishop. There is therefore every reason to suppose that his stone crosses, set up at his seven resting-places, would have on them some ornamentation characteristic of the time and of the country. William's account gives us evidence of the continuance of the practice of erecting such monuments at Glastonbury. There were in his time two pyramids standing a few feet from the ancient church. Their meaning he declared himself anxious but unable to make out. The one which was loftier and nearer to the church was twenty-six feet high, and it had five storeys, *tabulatus*[1]. It was very ancient, but there were on it things which could be clearly read though not clearly understood. On the upper tablet, or panel, or storey, it had a figure in pontifical dress; on the next a figure in the robes of a king, and certain letters which he gives; in the third and fourth, various names; in the lowest, another figure and six or seven names. For our present purpose we must not go into the question of these names: but it is necessary to warn those who consult Gale's edition of William's tract on the Antiquities of Glastonbury, that the editor could not

[1] Caesar in his Gallic War speaks of a tower of four storeys, *tabulatorum quatuor*, in the second declension.

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read correctly those of the Saxon characters which differed from the ordinary capitals or minuscules, being borrowed from the runic alphabet, namely *w* and *th*. One of his names is Pulfred, where the P is of course the Saxon *wen*, the name being Wulfred; another is Pinepegn, where he read both *wen* and *thorn* as *p*, the inscription being Wine thegn. He gives the name of one of the abbats as Estrepine. This is, of course, that most charming person Estrewine. It may be noted here as specially interesting that precisely this mistake completely led astray the learned Dane who first deciphered the runes on the Ruthwell cross. The words "Krist was on (the cross)," he read as "Krist-pason," and interpreted to mean a Christ-bason, or font; and the word, applied to our Lord, *giwundad*, wounded, the rune for *g* being X, he read XI punda, which he took to mean that ornaments weighing eleven pounds were given with the font[1].

It is the second pyramid or sepulchral obelisk

[1] The three characters are ƿ ᚹ þ. It has always been evident to modern readers that Gale had made these mistakes. I have to thank my old friend Dr. Sinker, the Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge, for verifying the fact from the early thirteenth century MS., R. 5. 33, which Gale published.

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that affords proof of the continuance of the practice of erecting such monuments before the time of Aldhelm's death. It was in four storeys, or had four panels in its height, and was eighteen feet high, thus coming strikingly near in height and character to the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses, and it had inscriptions on it, "Hedde Episcopus, Bregored, Beorward." This Hedde was Aldhelm's contemporary, and it was at his death in 705 that the see was divided and Aldhelm became Bishop of Sherborne. "Bregored" may be an evidence of a much earlier use of this kind of monument, for Bregored was the name of the Abbat of Glastonbury who comes next but one in the list to the abbat of the year 601.

Leland saw these obelisks, or pyramids, or tapering shafts, in the time of Henry VIII. They were greatly perished, so that even with the aid of a magnifying-glass he could scarcely make out enough to follow the description of William of Malmesbury. I have traced the mention of a portion of one of them down to the end of the eighteenth century, when it was a gate-post at one of the entries to the abbey enclosure; I sought in vain for it on the spot in the nineteenth century.

We are now in a position to look into the

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character of the fragments of Saxon crosses now to be seen at five of the sites which I have taken as resting-places for Aldhelm's body—Frome, Bradford, Bath, Colerne, and Littleton. At Doulting they still have Aldhelm's well in the vicarage-garden.

At Frome, built into the interior wall of the tower, there is a fragment of the shaft of an early Saxon cross. A diagram is given on p. 180. At the bottom of the panel is a quadruped, with its legs curiously hampered by interlacing bands; the details are so much destroyed that I have omitted this part. The animal catches in its jaws a narrow band which is the tail-part of a serpent or dragon, expanding, as will be seen, into a thick body, broken off near the neck. At the top of the fragment the neck and head of another dragon are seen, its body having been on the upper part of the panel, now lost. Excepting for one band which ends abruptly, it is a good design, well executed.

At Bradford on Avon there are two fragments of sculptured stones. One is certainly a portion of the arm of a cross, its end being rounded in the well-known fashion of such heads of Saxon and Anglian crosses as we have remaining. The other is as certainly a

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piece of the stem of the head of a cross, for it is bored (with great precision) some three or four inches deep, to fit on to a pin which stood up out of the top of the lower main shaft. Figure 9 shows the outlines of the patterns on its two fractured sides, the stone having been split vertically through the socket into two halves of which only one is known to exist. It is clear that the ornamentation on both sides consisted of the body of a lacertine or dragonesque creature tapering off into a band whose interlacements controlled the contortions of the serpent. The same figure shows the pattern on one of the sides of the arm of the cross. It will be seen that in one corner of the arm the pattern of interlacing bands is finished off with the neck and head of a nondescript. The work is throughout local and poor; not elaborately thought out or executed; just what might suffice for a local memorial of a passing corpse, but not of so careful a character as a sepulchral cross would require. Its motive is in complete accordance with the characteristic features of Wessex work.

Figure 10 shows the similar arm of a Saxon cross which is to be seen in the museum at Bath. It is a more careful piece of work than that at Bradford, but the method is the

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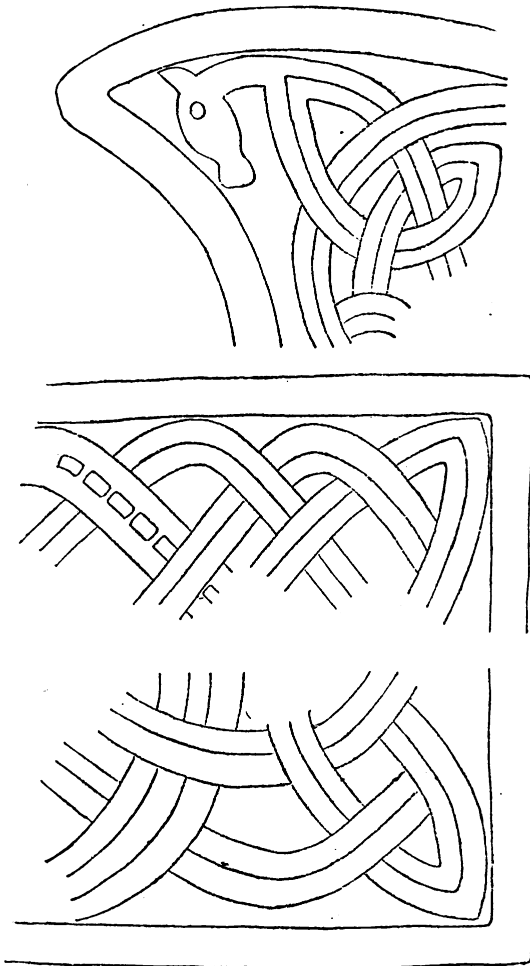

FIG. 9. Bradford on Avon.

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same as on the arm of that cross, a serpent being introduced in the same casual manner, in no proper relation to the interlacing bands; it will be seen, forming nearly the whole of a separate circle, one end finishing with its head, and then stopping abruptly before the circle is completed. We may certainly argue from this arm that the ornamentation of the shaft of the Bath cross was dragonesque. This monument has therefore the local motive.

Figure 11 shows the ornamentation on the two fragments of a shaft at Colerne. There is nothing better anywhere, of the dragonesque kind. The two heads shown on one of the fragments are very fine and complete. We evidently have here the fragments of a monument of more than ordinary perfection of design and execution, the working of the scales and markings on the bodies of the dragons being specially careful. It has been a monument of important magnitude also. At the top of the upper fragment the shaft is fourteen inches across, and with a decided increase of breadth downwards it would soon reach very considerable dimensions. The two heads of dragons show the top of the shaft; above them no doubt was the dowel hole for the reception of the massive head of the cross.

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The other piece, whose ornament consists of the involvements of four great dragons, must have been quite sixteen inches across. There can be very little doubt, if any, that this monument fulfils all conditions of period, local style, and importance, which naturally attach to the last resting-place but one before the saint reached his last home in this world. Of the connection of Colerne with Malmesbury we need not now speak. It may be noted here that eight miles from Colerne, over the Mercian border, at the ancient church of Abson, now held with its close neighbour Pucklechurch where the king's palace and Aldhelm's well were, is a fragment of a Saxon sculptured stone, with a portion of a dragon upon it of the same type as those at Colerne and Bradford.

Last of all we come to the remarkable stones at Littleton Drew, shown in figure 12. There are two of them, standing on either side of the path of the churchyard. The stone on the west side of the path would fit on to the top of the other, and together they would be about six feet high. They have formed the shaft of a cross of very considerable importance, and of the same dimensions as that at Colerne, the width of the face of

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10. BATH

11. COLERNE

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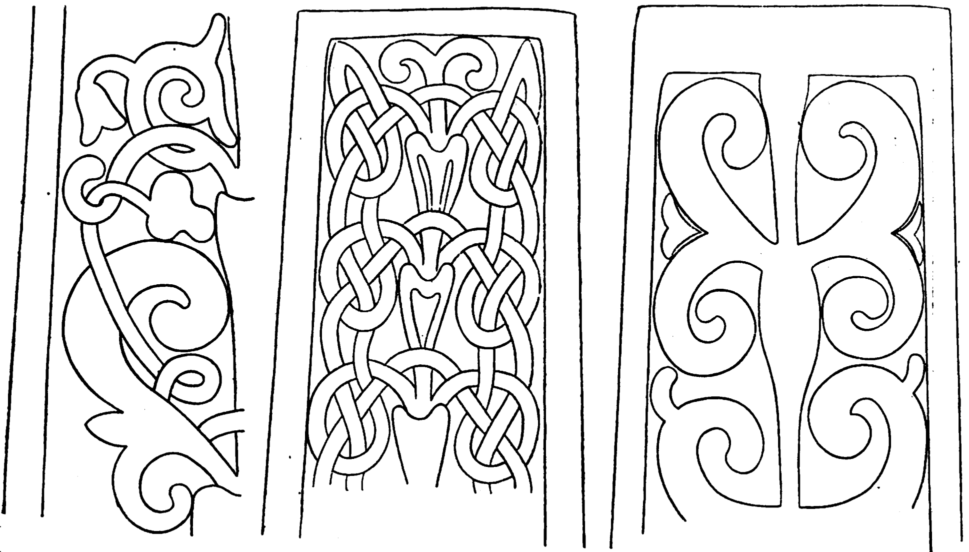

FIG. 12. Littleton Drew.

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the shaft at its highest point being a little over fourteen inches; the width of the side of the shaft at that point is about twelve and a half inches.

The sculpture on the south side of each stone has been dressed off when the stones were used for building the Norman or post-Norman church of the parish. Considering the almost universal destruction of the crosses which must have been a very noble ornament of Anglo-Saxon churchyards, it may fairly be argued that the Normans took their ornamentation to mean that they were offered to evil spirits, and therefore smashed them up and used them for building. There are other indications of the Norman idea that the English were infected with an ingrained leaning towards paganism. However that may have been, the builders who used these two most massive stones dressed one face smooth. The sculpture on the east side of the stone on the east of the path is also destroyed; and the west side of the stone on the west is so much broken that it is not worth reproducing. It is unfortunately on this broken face that the inscription is found which marks out this Littleton cross from all other Anglo-Saxon stones in the districts

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under survey. The figure shows quite all that remains of the inscription, perhaps a little more than is really there. They are very noble letters, much larger than those on the Ruthwell cross. The only letter of that early period resembling these in size is the great A on the side of Acca's cross which bore the long inscription, a small part still remaining. The Acca A and the Littleton A are each of them a little over three inches long. Acca was a correspondent of Bede, and was a grown man at the time of Aldhelm's death.

What may have been the ornamentation on the south side of each portion of the shaft we cannot say. It is clear that of the other three sides two were occupied by foliaginous designs of a very unusual character, as will be seen from the figures to the right of the page and to the left, the latter showing only one half of the face. To an experienced mind, it is always perilous to say that a piece of Anglo-Saxon ornament is unique; but in the present case it is safe to ask where else a monument with this ornament has been found. The remaining face was occupied by a curious combination of the ideas of vegetable growth and interlacement of bands. This has to a large extent

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perished on one of the portions of the shaft, but on the other it can with patience be made out with tolerable clearness, as shown in the middle figure. Reference has already been made to this combination, in connection with one face of the West Camel stone. The work on the Littleton shaft is much more regular and systematic than the work at West Camel; but there can be no question of the sameness of motive. Whether the dressed face at Littleton carried dragonesque ornament can only be a question of conjecture; but inasmuch as at West Camel the dragonesque detail and the unusual combination referred to are found in adjacent panels on the same face of the shaft, there can be no decisive argument against their having existed on different faces of the Littleton shaft. Thus, however unlike one another the shafts at Littleton and Colerne are, so far as the patterns now existing are concerned, they may have been practically identical.

There are at Minety, a possession of Malmesbury to the north-east of Colerne and Littleton, fragments of a very handsome shaft with foliaginous ornament of exceedingly archaic character; but the work there is of the nature of a flowing stem and spiral

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tendrils, with actual leaves and flowers, not unlike one of the faces of the grand shaft at Abercorn[1], which dates from the time we are considering, but has a beautiful freedom in place of the very stiff archaism of the Minety fragments.

In considering the probabilities of the very early existence of surface ornament of stone in Wessex, we cannot overlook the very remarkable and massive stone still remaining in Aldhelm's ecclesiola at Bradford on Avon, shown in figure 13. It is a combination of Irish work and Lombardic work. Its dimensions and its thickness show that it served as a jamb to one of the narrow doorways characteristic of the period and of the little church. The divergent spirals are most unmistakably Irish, and the border is Anglian or Lombardic; the remaining pattern is found in one of the Durham manuscripts of date as early as Aldhelm's time. The famous font at Deerhurst[2] in Gloucestershire has the same remarkable combination of unmistakably Irish work with work of a diametrically opposite character, an elegant classical arabesque. For the Irish influence, Maildubh's presence may

[1] *Theodore and Wilfrith*, figs. 9, 10. [2] *Ib.*, fig. 20.

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afford a sufficient explanation; for the other parts of the artistic work I am disposed not

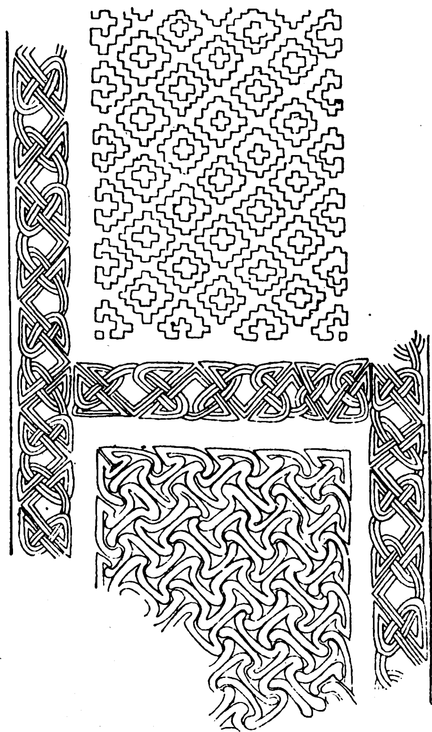

FIG. 13. Bradford on Avon.

to look to Anglian or any other home influence, but to look boldly to the foreign

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source, as I believe, of the beautiful work of the Northumbrian Angles, and to look to that source at a date which gives to our Wessex art a great antiquity.

We all know that the West Saxons were not converted by or through the Augustinian mission, but by a separate mission, by the ministry of Birinus. This Birinus was consecrated Bishop at Genoa, by the Pope's advice, in 634; not, as is usually said, by the Bishop of Genoa, but by the Archbishop of Milan, who at that time was living in the city of his southernmost suffragan, at Genoa. Birinus, then, with this Lombardic connection, baptized the King of Wessex at the Oxford Dorchester in 635, our Northumbrian Oswald being by chance at the Court at the time, having come for his bride, the King's daughter.

I do not see why we should have any hesitation in supposing that a man like Birinus, treated with special favour at the King's Court, would naturally establish at once a certain amount of religious pomp and apparatus; and that it would be like in style to that to which he had been accustomed in his home in North Italy, presumably with some blending of the kind of ornament which

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he found in popular acceptance among his new flock. I think we may fairly say that the remarkable combination of (1) classical ornament, (2) interlacing bands as at Brescia, (3) dragonesque ornamentation, exactly suits the facts of his Lombardic origin and his West Saxon position.

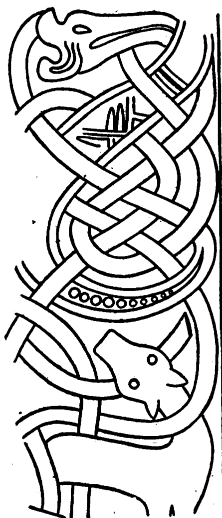

FIG. 14. Frome, p. 168.

In connection with the funeral procession of Aldhelm, it is interesting to associate in their death-days three of the most prominent early figures of the *Ecclesia Anglicana*. Aldhelm died on May 25, Augustine and Bede on May 26. Their respective days in the Calendar are May 25, May 26, and May 27. This is not the place to discuss the controversy as to the day and year of Bede's death.

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CHAPTER VII

The Abbey of Malmesbury two hundred and fifty years after Aldhelm.—Relics of the Saint.—The silver-gilt shrine.—The miracles shown on the panels of the shrine.—Other gold and silver work in Wessex.—Organs, bells, and other gifts from Dunstan.—The Danes and the shrine.—Later history of the shrine.—The abbats to William's time.—Some lesser miracles.

We must carry our notes on Aldhelm, and his connection with Malmesbury, some way beyond his death. In so doing we have the advantage of possessing descriptions by Faritius and William of what in their days was still to be seen at the Abbey. As we have already said, William is rather severe upon Faritius, a monk at Malmesbury one generation before himself, because he did not sufficiently verify his statements, a charge in support of which he does not give—and we do not find—satisfactory evidence. In one case, at least, the account given by Faritius is more full than that of William, and in this case he is simply describing what he had seen with his own eyes. It so happens, too, that

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in this case the detail which he gives and William does not give is quite as interesting as any part of the account in which it finds a place; and besides that, it has a special value of its own, and is so far as I know unique in its information.

Under the guidance of Faritius and William, we make a jump of two hundred and fifty years, and look at Malmesbury as it was two generations before Faritius, as that writer sets it before us.

In the time of King Edwy, about 955, monastic institutions had very grievously deteriorated. Even Malmesbury had suffered. But it very soon rose again, and did not hide its candle long under a bushel. The monks recovered their tone, and determined to do special honour to their great founder. They raised the bones of Aldhelm from the sarcophagus in which they had been laid, and placed them in a silver shrine. This shrine they adorned with plates of silver gilt, on which were shown some of the marvels with which their saint was in his lifetime concerned, the Book, namely, and the Beam, and the Boy, and the Chasuble. These panels of silver gilt still remained in the time of Faritius, whose account this is. William merely

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remarks that they represented in raised metal the miracles which he has in his history described. It is to Faritius that we owe the list of the miracles. It may be noted that Faritius speaks of the gilded plates as having the representations incised; but William tells us that the scenes were shown in raised metal on the back of the shrine, the front being occupied by figures in solid silver. He states that the shrine had been made for the bones of the saint a hundred years before the restoration in 955, and made by King Ethelwulf, son of Egbert and father of Alfred. The scenes, he says, shown on the four panels were described in letters, taken it was supposed from a life of the saint which was lost in the time of the Danes. King Ethelwulf affixed a pediment of crystal to the shrine, on which the saint's name could be read in letters of gold. We cannot avoid seeing here a reference to the style of workmanship of which we have an admirable example in King Alfred's jewel, where a plate of rock crystal is laid over cloisonné enamel, and the legend is wrought in letters of gold. We may take it as certain that the work in Edwy's time was only a restoration, and that the silver-gilt plates were at least as early as Ethelwulf's reign.

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That king was a great owner of gold work, as we know from the list of his presents to the Pope. We have a list of them in Anastasius[1]. Ethelwulf gave to Benedict III a crown of pure gold weighing four pounds, two cups and two images of gold, four Saxon dishes of silver gilt, and other things, in all of which gold is mentioned, a sword with gold, a silk rochet with clasp of gold, several albs of white silk with gold lace and clasps, and two large curtains of silk embroidered with gold. These last were nothing new in Wessex, for Aldhelm specially names (see Chapter IX) golden hangings shining yellow with inwoven threads. Georgi[2] states or guesses the allocation of these gifts, the crown and images at the altar of St. Peter, the dishes to receive the offerings at the Mass, the curtains or hangings to adorn the basilica on great festivals.

In connection with Aldhelm's shrine and its panels of precious metal embossed with the representations of scenes from his life, it is of extreme interest to know that we have still in existence a contemporary piece of work, much more splendid because on a

[1] *De vitis pontificum*, v. i. 403.

[2] *De liturgia Romani Pontificis*, vol. i, at various pages.

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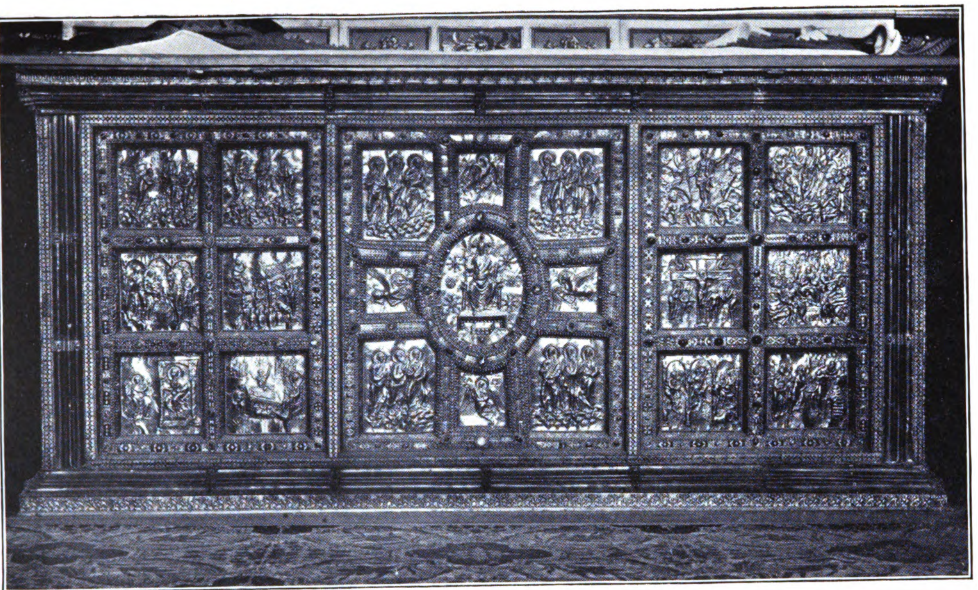

15. ALTAR OF WOLVINIUS

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greatly larger scale, but of exactly the same character. It is the noble palla of the altar of Wolvinius in S. Ambrogio at Milan, the west face being shown in figure 15. This wonderful work has on one side, towards the east, twelve panels of subjects from the life of St. Ambrose, each lettered with a description of the scene as the panels of Aldhelm's shrine evidently were, e.g. *Ubi examen apum pueri os complevit Ambrosii*, 'Where a swarm of bees filled the mouth of Ambrose when a child.' In the centre are four panels, the two upper ones containing St. Michael and St. Gabriel, the two lower containing St. Ambrose, in the one case with a figure below him labelled *Domnus Angilbertus*, in the other with a kneeling workman labelled *Wolvinius Magister Phaber*. Angilbertus was Archbishop of Milan in 834, six years after Ecgbert was king. It is practically beyond doubt that King Ethelwulf, Ecgbert's son, saw this great work of art, and it was probably he who had a shrine made for St. Aldhelm of the same character; in that case probably the same master-smith made it. We cannot be solidly gainsaid if we please to claim Wulfwine the master-smith as himself an artisan from Wessex.

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The beautiful piece of gold and enamel work, known as King Alfred's jewel, carries on the reputation of Wessex for artistic taste and workmanship in gold into the next generation. In the generation which followed we have a still more striking piece of gold work still remaining to us, in the stole of Bishop Frithestan.

The stole of Bishop Frithestan may now be seen in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Durham. It was taken from the tomb of St. Cuthbert on the occasion so excellently and fully described by the late James Raine in his *Saint Cuthbert*: Durham, 1828. It was given to the body of St. Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street by Athelstan, Alfred's favourite grandson. It was worked at Winchester between the years 905 and 916, by order of Ælflæd, the Queen of Alfred's son and successor Edward. Alfred's jewel has the inscription *Ælfred mec heht gewyrcan*, "Alfred me caused make." The stole has the Latin form of the inscription, *Ælflæd fieri precepit*, "Ælflæd caused to be made," the Latin passive taking the place of the Saxon active. It is a wonderful piece of work, woven in flat gold wire, with self-edged openings for the insertion of tapestry-work figures of prophets

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16. FRITHESTAN'S STOLE

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and the letters of inscriptions. It was made, as itself declares, *pio episcopo Frithestano,* for the pious Bishop Frithestan. Ælflæd died in 916, and Frithestan became Bishop in 905, so we have the date sure. Figures 16 and 17 show this wonderful work. The use of a magnifying glass reveals the texture of the woven gold. It is quite possible that Aldhelm's phrase in his poem on Bugge's *Basilica* describes work of exactly this character two hundred and fifty years before Athelstan, see page 242.

Now, not only does Ælflæd's stole carry on her father-in-law's inscription, only spoiled by its ecclesiastical purpose which turned it into Latin, but I suggest a more important connection still. Professor Earle finds the type of the face of the figure on the jewel in Irish art. But it is in outline long and rather emaciated, and the faces in the Book of Kells are plump and well liking. I find just the right length and thinness of face in the prophets on Ælflæd's stole, and I venture to suggest that Alfred's artists and Ælflæd's went to the same Byzantine source for the faces of their figures. Inasmuch as the Irish art was not improbably Byzantine in origin, Professor Earle's remarks about the eyes of the figure

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on the jewel may well be in point, for the treatment of eyes on sculpture and in parchment in the earliest times in these islands followed, rather closely, accepted types, while other parts varied. The specially close relationship between Alfred's jewel and the Winchester stole of the next generation of his family will be found not only in the shape of the face, but also, and very pointedly, in the outline of the hair.

We have in William of Malmesbury an account which carries us on to Athelstan's own generation, for the stole, though given by him to St. Cuthbert, was made in his boyhood in his father's time. King Athelstan, the great benefactor of the town of Malmesbury, whose bones lie somewhere within the Abbey precincts [1], his supposed tomb being in the existing church, had a shrine made for the relics of St. Paternus. On this shrine he placed the inscription, so fittingly recalled in this year of the coronation of the first King-emperor of these realms since the Saxon times, *Hoc opus rex Ethelstanus totius Bri-*

[1] The remains of a very fine person, of considerable stature and powerful development of head, were found in this present year, 1903, close to the spot where the high altar was, near to which Athelstan's body rested.

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17. FRITHESTAN'S STOLE

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tanniae multarumque gentium in circuitu positarum imperator in honorem sancti Paterni fieri iussit, "This work King Athelstan, of all Britain and of many surrounding nations emperor, to the honour of Saint Paternus caused to be made."

Both at the beginning and at the end of Athelstan's life we find evidence of the family love for splendour and for work in gold. His grandfather Alfred had a great affection for him, as a boy of astonishing beauty and graceful manners, and gave him a scarlet cloak, a belt studded with diamonds, and a sword with a golden scabbard. William of Malmesbury saw his remains when his shrine in the Abbey Church was opened: the hair was flaxen, and beautifully wreathed with golden threads.

William of Malmesbury enables us to carry the hereditary love for gold and silver work far back in the family of Ethelwulf and Alfred. Ethelwulf's great-great-great-uncle was Ina, King of Wessex, from whose brother Ingild Ecgbert descended in the fourth generation. William tells us[1] that Ina made a "chapel" of gold and silver and placed it beneath the

[1] *De Antiq. Glaston. Ecclesiae*, in Gale's *X Scriptores*.

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larger[1] (church or chapel). It would appear that this indicates a *confessio*, and that he uses the word *capella* in a special sense, as the complete equipment for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, a sense something like that in which the word is used in the Middle Ages for the portable "chapel" of a king in camp with his host. He gave 2,640 lbs. of silver for the construction of the chapel, and there was an altar of 264 lbs. of gold. For the chalice and paten there were 10 lbs. of gold, for the censer 8 lbs. and 20 mancuses, for candelabra 12½ lbs. of silver, for the covers of the gospels 20 lbs. and 60 mancuses of gold, for the water-cruets and other altar-vessels 17 lbs. of gold, for the basons 8 lbs. of gold, for the holy-water-vessel 20 lbs. of silver, for images of our Lord the Blessed Virgin and the Twelve Apostles 38 lbs. of gold and 175 lbs. of silver. These weights come to within a few pennyweights of 102 lbs. of gold, besides the 264 lbs. of gold in the altar. The pall of the altar and the sacer-

[1] *Infra majorem collocavit.* About fifty years after William's time, Prior Richard of Hexham, describing the church which Wilfrith built there a little before Ina's reign, remarks on the most secret and beautiful oratories found underground, in which were altars with their apparatus most honorifically prepared.

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dotal vestments were subtilly woven of gold and adorned with precious stones. These hangings and vestments woven of gold in Ina's time suggest that the weaving with gold ribband, described above as characterizing Frithestan's stole, was no new art in the royal family of Wessex in Edward the Elder's time.

At the risk of making this digression seem too long, I must carry the evidence of Wessex work in the precious metals, and of the permanence of Wessex forms of inscription, a generation later than Athelstan's time, though, as will be seen, the evidence is not so absolutely conclusive as in his case. The story is a romance of archaeology.

Many of us have seen in the treasury of the church of Ste. Gudule, in Brussels, the great reliquary in the form of a cross, which is said to contain the two largest portions of the true Cross in existence. Erasmus, who knew the Low Countries only too well, declared in his notes on the whited sepulchres of St. Matthew, that there were there enough portions of the true Cross, if they were collected, to freight a large ship. There is also, in this Ste. Gudule reliquary, one of the nails of the Cross, which the visitor can see through a piece of glass.

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The cross has at its centre a crown of thorns, and on the arms and head and stem a number of the emblems of the Passion. There is no inscription, and there is nothing ancient about the reliquary.

In 1891, Dr. Logeman, the Professor of English Philology at Ghent, became possessed of a manuscript which described an inscription of a curious character on this cross, in a language which the writer of the manuscript had not understood. It was sufficiently like Flemish to tempt him into some very quaint interpretations; but it was not Flemish. No such inscription, nor, as I have said, any inscription at all, could be seen upon the cross as it stood in the treasury, examine it as you would. At this point it would be well to relate what is known of the history and provenance of the cross from which not only this remarkable inscription but all indications of antiquity had so completely disappeared. It will eventually give us the clue we need.

The reliquary was given to the church of Ste. Gudule by the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, by their will; it had been one of the ornaments of their chapel in Brussels since 1605. The Archduke died in 1621, and the Archduchess, who was a daughter of Philip II

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of Spain, and had the Netherlands for her dowry, ruled alone after the death of her husband till her own death in 1633, when their will took effect, and the reliquary came to Ste. Gudule. It had come to the Archdukes—I wish we still retained that royal use in England, and spoke of the Princes of Wales and the Dukes of Cornwall, *principes* and *duces*, not *principem* and *principissam*, *ducem* and *ducissam*—it had come to them from Cologne, to which place it had been carried by the Bishop of Haarlem, when he fled from the reformers in 1573. It had reached the Low Countries long before, when Egbert, Archbishop of Trèves, gave it to the Abbey of Egmond. This Egbert, whose name is suspiciously English, indeed there is scarcely any not-English Egbert before 1100, is said to have been a son of Theodoric II, Count of Holland. This reigning Count, Dietrich or Thierry, ruled Holland from 963 to 988. He was allied to English families, and his son Egbert is said to have exploited this insular connection. He invited his English friends and relatives to visit him at Trèves, and when he got them there he spoiled them of their goods, and made them send over as ransoms a number of other precious things for the

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adornment of his chapel. We must remember that date, 963 to 988, to which we seem to have traced the cross.

At the time of the French Revolution the cross was plundered of its jewels, and broken in two pieces. In the same year, 1793, it was restored, covered on the front with copper, and attested and sealed by the Papal Nuncio. This copper covering, with the emblems of the Passion, is the front of the cross as we have seen it. Dr. Logeman interested the Dean of Brussels in the investigation which the manuscript had set going, and as the Dean of Brussels is usually a person of importance at Rome he was enabled to break the Nuncio's seals and remove the copper covering. There stood revealed a singularly graceful and beautiful Anglo-Saxon cross, with plates of embossed silver, the Agnus Dei with its inscription in front, *Agnus Di*, the symbols of the Evangelists, an inscription across the arms of the cross, and a long inscription running completely round the silver plates on the edge of the cross, from the bottom at one side, round the arms and head, and down to the bottom on the other side, all in Anglo-Saxon. Across the arms, in beautifully dainty lettering, is the inscription in raised capitals, *Drah-*

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mal me worhte ("Drahmal wrought me"): who Drahmal was we do not know; the name does not occur elsewhere. The inscriptions on the edges are—to turn them into modern English—"Rood is my name. Once I bare the Rich King, trembling, blood-bedabbled. This rood Æthelmær caused work, and Adelwold his brother, to the glory of Christ, for the soul of Ælfric their brother." The cross itself is shown in figure 18, and by its side one edge with its inscription, *Rod is min name geo ic ricne cyninc baer byfigynde* ... (*b*) *lode bestemed.*

Now here we have two—or rather three—examples of the persistence of a form. The work of art itself speaks. It was so in the earliest sacred song of the English race which has come down to us, two hundred years before Alfred, three hundred years before the end of the reign of the father of Archbishop Egbert of Trèves, the great sacred song of which there are stanzas in runes on the cross at Ruthwell, in Dumfriesshire, erected about 680; it was so with Alfred's jewel; it was so with Ælflæd's golden stole; it is so with Drahmal's cross. That is the first point. Next, the cross of Drahmal has exactly the words on it which are found on the Ruthwell

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cross, "I bare the rich King," the cross thus telling of the Crucifixion, and "with blood bedabbled." That same great sacred song is found in the Vercelli manuscript of Anglo-Saxon poems, a manuscript of the tenth century, at much greater length than on the Ruthwell cross. In this manuscript the poem is in the dialect of Wessex, not of Northumbria. Drahmal got his inscription from the Wessex manuscript, not from the Ruthwell cross, for while the words "I bare the rich King" and "with blood bedabbled" are common to the Ruthwell cross, the Vercelli manuscript, and Drahmal's cross, the assertion of Drahmal's that it trembled under its burden is not given in that form on the Ruthwell cross[1], but the Vercelli manuscript makes the cross say "that I trembling saw." That is the second point. It is the third point that links us on to the Alfred jewel. "Drahmal me worked," "Rood is my name." "This rood Æthelmær caused work." Here we have the "me," and the "caused work," and the order, of the jewel, "Ælfred me caused work."

[1] See *Theodore and Wilfrith*, p. 252, 'ic that al bih[eald]': the runes are the ten lowest letters in figure 15 on page 246 of that little book.

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18. CROSS OF DRAHMAL

To face p. 196

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If any one feels inclined to follow my example and go to Vercelli to see this most interesting volume of Anglo-Saxon prose and poetry, he must be prepared to practise patience and persistence. The whole air of the cathedral functionaries is *domani.* But when he does get hold of the book, he will greatly enjoy the beautiful preservation in which he will find it, and the excellence of the ink and of the writing.

The dates we were to remember, as those to which we could trace back this reliquary, were 963 to 988. The only instance in English history in which the names found on Drahmal's Cross, Æthelmær, Adelwold, and Ælfric, are brought near together, occurs in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the years 982, 983, 984. That is a surprising coincidence, of which, however, it is possible to make too much. They are not described in the Chronicle as brothers, but no student of the Chronicle will be disturbed by that omission. In the Chronicle, Ælfric survived Æthelmær and Æthelwold, while Drahmal's Cross was made by order of Æthelmær and Adelwold for Ælfric's soul. But in the Isle of Man about that time people were setting up crosses for their own soul and the soul of

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a relative, and it is not at all necessary to take it that Ælfric was dead. Indeed it is very easy to imagine circumstances under which two brothers might cause a costly work to be produced for the safety of the soul of a brother for whom they were anxious. This would be specially likely to be so, if one of them was a Churchman of much piety and the other a layman of great position who knew the dangers of the times, while the brother for whose soul the costly work was wrought was perhaps a good deal younger than they, and was a man likely soon to be set in the midst of many and great dangers. This exactly describes the three men whose names occur in the Chronicle. In 982 Dorsetshire was ravaged by Vikings, London was burned, and *Æthelmær*, Alderman of Hampshire, died, and was buried in the new monastery at Winchester. In 983 Ælfhere, Alderman of Mercia, died, and *Ælfric* succeeded to the same aldermanship. In 984 died *Æthelwold*, the benevolent Bishop of Winchester, father of monks. In 985 *Ælfric* was driven from the country. The abstract guess that Ælfric might be a young brother, for whom the two older men were anxious, has received since I wrote it a curious con-

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firmation. I find that he was called in Saxon "Ælfric child," and in Latin *cognomento puer.*

Thus I think that in working out our parallel with the inscription on the jewel, we have done something to claim for Wessex that beautiful Drahmal Cross, and Drahmal the artist himself. I think that Bishop Æthelwold and Alderman Æthelmær, both living in Winchester, arranged the design, and had it worked out by the head of the Winchester school of artists in gold and silver, a man after King Alfred's own heart, Drahmal. Bound up with the validity of that claim, is the inter-communion between Mercia and Wessex, a puzzling political and topographical question.

I may add that Dr. Logeman sent over to me in 1891 his original photographs of the whole of the Drahmal Cross, and most kindly allowed me to 'cause work' lantern slides from them.

Reference has been made to the quaint translations by the author of the manuscript, on which the whole discovery turned. The word "bedabbled" is in Anglian and Saxon alike "bestemed." This the ingenious person took to be two Flemish words, *beste med,* and he

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translated it *optima virgo.* "Blode" he felt sure meant blood, as in fact it does. "Wyrican" is spelled of course with the Saxon wen, and looks like "Pyrican." He knew the connection between *l* and *r*, and between a Pelican and blood, and he translated it Pelicanus.

We must now return to Malmesbury.

Aldhelm's miracles of the Boy (at Rome), and the Book (at Dover), and the Chasuble (at Rome) have been already described. The miracle of the Beam occurred at Malmesbury itself, when Aldhelm was building his great Church of St. Mary, which remained to William's days, and excelled, as he tells, in beauty and magnitude every building of the old times which had come down to his age. The stone walls having been completed, they came to the roof, which was massively formed of wood. The beams were in themselves very costly, and the distance from which they had to be conveyed added much to the cost. They had all been cut to the same length, except one whose shortness had escaped the notice of the artificers, either through their want of care, or, as William preferred to think, by the Divine will, in order that the sanctity of the illustrious man

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might shine out clearly. When the workmen discovered at the end of their work that the last beam was too short, they made great lamentation among themselves, and then told the saint about it. He treated their fault with moderation, but was no little moved on account of the difficulty of setting the matter right. There was only exactly the necessary number of beams, no spare ones having been provided; and to bring another beam all that long way appeared an immense labour. Despairing of human help, he placed his hope in God, and meditated a ready means of remedy. He was minded to show forth miracle, having already performed many, but not openly, lest the wind of popular favour should make the most holy flowers of conscience fall. Moving his lips in silent prayer, and making a slight effort with his arms, he brought the shortened beam to the same length as the rest. He then, to conceal the fact of the miracle, scolded the workmen for having played a trick upon him, the beam being no shorter than the others. They applied the measure, found that the defect was remedied, took in good part the rebuke, and set to work with joy. They attached the ropes, and with their machine raised the

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beam to its place. It exactly fitted, and the framework of the roof was complete. The truth of the tradition was shown by the history of the beam. It passed unhurt through the two fires which in the times of King Alfred and King Edward burned the whole monastery, and it only succumbed at last to age and decay. We may note as interesting features the precision of the order for beams sent to some distant place, the exact number and the exact size being named; the mention of pulleys; and the fact that in William's judgement the beams of a roof constructed in the most expensive manner perished in natural course in four centuries or less.

There have been several miracles in connection with beams. The beam on which Aidan leaned in the death agony withstood the violence of more than one conflagration. Dunstan, by the virtue of the sign of the cross, brought to a horizontal level the framework of a roof which was bulging downwards.

Archbishop Dunstan, 960 to 988, preferred Malmesbury over all monasteries except his own, by which we must understand that Glastonbury was meant. He gave bells to Malmesbury, remarkable for their size and

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tone; for which, Faritius tells us, Dunstan paid four hundred pounds. He gave also an organ, no doubt in some part at least made by himself; on it was inscribed, on bronze plates, a dactylic distich which Faritius in his time saw,

Orgána do Sancto Praesul Dunstanus Adelmo.
Perdat hic aeternum qui vult hinc tollere regnum.
I the Prelate Dunstan give organs[1] to Aldhelm.
May he who wills to take them hence lose the eternal realm.

Aldhelm himself, it may be remarked in passing, had described an organ two hundred and fifty years before Dunstan's time, and had contrasted it with other instruments and with the human voice in its connection with sacred music. Writing of divine worship, he addresses the worshipper thus:—

. . . .

Let him modulate hymns to Christ with the strings of the lyre.

But if any will not have the odes of chords, desiring mightier sounds than the comb brings from the strings, with which the pious Psalmist harped as he flung himself in ecstatic measure, and declines to be content with graceful song; let him listen to the great organs with

[1] "A pair of organs" was the early name of an organ.

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their thousand blasts, and soothe his hearing with gusty bellows, while the other parts of the instrument flash from their gilded case.

Faritius and William both of them say that on the vessel which supplied the ministrants at the altar with water was this inscription—

> Hydriolam hanc fundi Dunstan mandaverat Archi-
> Praesul ut in templo sancto servaret Adelmo [1].

> This water-pot Dunstan caused cast, the Arch-
> Prelate, to serve the holy Aldhelm in the temple.

William, who is sometimes a little too simple in his remarks, adds that the first *l* in Aldhelm, which in each case he retains, has to be omitted by poetic licence to make the verses scan. Faritius simply writes the name as Adelm, and says nothing about it.

Faritius, who has told us the cost of the great bells, a valuable and most rare piece of information which William does not give and Faritius cannot have invented, mentions another very interesting fact of which William says nothing. There hung over the high table in the refectory a small bell, gilt. Faritius

[1] In his book on the Antiquities of Glastonbury, William tells us that the water-vessel there bore the inscription—from which a word has been dropped—
"Idriolam hanc fundi Dunstan mandaverat Archi-
Praesul, cunctipotens quem servet in aevum."

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reports that he read in letters of pure gold stamped on or into it a Latin distich, with a play no doubt on the word "hall,"

> Elysiam caeli nunquam contendat ad aulam
> Qui ferat hanc nolam Aldelmi de sede beati.

> May he never reach the Elysian hall of heaven
> Who takes this bell from the seat of Aldhelm the blessed.

Here the *l* in Aldhelm is needed by the scansion, and Faritius quietly inserts it.

It is only just to Faritius to point out that this additional fact and inscription, which we owe entirely to him, introduces in an interesting manner two of the several names for bells. He and William alike call them *Signa*, signs, notices, in reference to their use as announcing the hours of service, and so on. This word is used for any instrument which served this purpose, as, for instance, a resonant board struck with a padded stick. In the third Latin distich, which Faritius alone gives, Dunstan used the name *Nola*, bells having been, it is said, first used at Nola, in Campania. From Campania, it is said, bells were called *Campana* [1], a word we know so well in

[1] In the book referred to in the previous note, William gives the first line of a Glastonbury inscription :

"Hanc sibi campanam Dunstan perfundere iussit, &c."

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the distinctive name of a bell-tower, *campanile.* Faritius uses the diminutive form of the word for this small refectory bell, calling it *Campanula,* a word which again we know so well in connection with bell-shaped flowers. It may perhaps be new to some, and if it is it will certainly be interesting, that the squills which are now just peeping up in our borders take their name from the Latin name *squilla* of the small bell rung in monastic dormitories. Dante uses the word in Italian for a small bell:

> E che lo nuovo peregrin d'amore
> Punge, se ode squilla di lontano,
> Che paia il giorno pianger che si more.
>
> *Purg.* viii. 4–6.

The word used at Iona in Columba's time was *clocca. Cloccam pulsa* was the order given by Columba when he wished the brethren to be called to the church. There is, after all, some use in Faritius. And he adds that Dunstan gave many more things which they had still at Malmesbury, but he abstains from describing them, lest by speaking of their wealth he should move others to envy. If only he had known how intensely we should have enjoyed the kind of detail he evidently would have given about these things he does not name!

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Dunstan was a statesman, and he foresaw the evils that were to come from the later Danish invasions. Fearing that the gold and silver of the saint's shrine would excite the cupidity of the Northmen, and the remains of the saint would suffer indignity and perhaps be thrown out, he removed the bones—Faritius says "the body," but William's details are evidently correct, he had, as we shall see, later information than Faritius had—to a tomb of stone set high up in the church, wrapping the bones first in a glistening and delicate white napkin, and then in a very precious scarlet robe. He added a portion of the ashes taken from the ancient sarcophagus, where all the flesh had passed into dust. With these relics he placed a glass phial full of the purest balsam. Round the sepulchre he inscribed verses, in which he begged the saint to pardon his loving one for his offences, and not to impute it to him as a fault that he had raised him to a higher place.

It would appear from what follows that the meaning of this is that the shrine with its silver and silver-gilt sides, and its incrustation of precious stones, and even with some of the dust of the saint within, was left in its original position, and that Dunstan's

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purpose was—not to save the valuable shrine, but—to save the bones of the saint from indignity when—if so it should happen—the silver shrine itself was pillaged, there being nothing about the new stone receptacle to attract any special attention, or promise any treasure. For when the Danes came they found the church, as they thought, bare of everything except the shrine, the monks having removed all else that would be of value in the eyes of the invaders. The stone sepulchre did not come under that category, and no doubt remained. The Danes made at once for the shrine in the sanctuary, Faritius tells us, a graphic touch, and one of them drew his knife and tried to cut out some of the precious stones. He was at once struck down, senseless; blind, Faritius says. In fear and haste the pillagers fled, and did not stay till they had put many miles between themselves and Malmesbury. Further, the news spread through their army; and while all the monasteries round were plundered, every one gave a wide berth to St. Aldhelm and Malmesbury.

Foes almost worse than the Danes and Northmen did much harm, in the persons of unworthy abbats. One Abbat Brihtwold, who

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alienated the lands of the abbey—with so much excuse as this, to be quite fair, William kindly adds, that the Danegelt must be paid —died suddenly while engaged in a drinking bout in the town. They buried him among his predecessors in the Church of St. Andrew, which was attached to the main church; but the watchers there saw fantastic shades, and the body must be moved. They sank him in a deep marsh a long way from the monastery; but even to William's days there came from the place from time to time an exceeding bad smell. It is not impossible that the people in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury have experiences which might suggest an identification of the place.

Later in time, a Norman abbat, Warin of Lire, plundered the property of the abbey to increase his influence with great men. Worse than that, he could not bear the odour of the bodies of departed saints. They still had the bones of Maildubh, of happy Irish memory; they had the bones of many prelates who had risen from the rank of monks of Malmesbury, and had left orders that when they died they should be laid to rest in the dear old place; they had the bones of the great John the Scot, whom the monks reverenced almost as

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profoundly as their chief Saint Aldhelm. These were arranged in two stone chests, wooden partitions being inserted between the several sets of bones. All of these he ordered to be carelessly hidden away in a far corner of the basilica of St. Michael, a church which he had widened and heightened. An unseemly jest increased the gravity of the misdeed. "If they don't like it, let the best man amongst them," he said, "protect the rest." "But," William breaks in, always human, "I will restrain my pen! I will bridle my spirit!" for Warin was converted to St. Aldhelm by a miracle. A fisherman of the Isle of Wight, the island, Faritius says, called in English Wickland, was struck blind while fishing. He waited in vain for a cure for three years at Christ Church, the oratory, Faritius says, called in English *Christi Ecclesia*—what a pity he gave it in Latin. At last the man came to Malmesbury and was cured, a quantity of blood flowing from his eyes. Warin thereupon determined that St. Aldhelm must be restored to his shrine. He and Abbat Serlo of Gloucester, after fasting for three days before Pentecost, examined the stone chest, to see if the tradition of the monks was correct, and found it even so; there were the bones, as

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the monks had always said. Then they sent for Osmund, Bishop of Salisbury, orthodox bishop Faritius curiously calls him, and with all due solemnity the saint's bones were placed once more in the silver shrine, with the scenes of four of the principal miracles embossed on silver plates gilt. Faritius says that the shrine itself was gilt, and with that his life of St. Aldhelm ends.

William does not carry his account much further, but he gives us some historical details of the years which followed. The most important of them is this, that when Archbishop Lanfranc heard of the marvels wrought by Aldhelm, he promulgated a law throughout the whole of England that without delay Aldhelm was to be held, and honoured, as a saint. An annual fair also was instituted at the time of his feast, for the quaint reason that the desire to make money might attract some whom the holiness of the saint had not moved.

Then came Abbat Godefrey, a monk of Jumièges, who greatly adorned the church, and laid the foundations of the famous library, a work in which William himself helped him. Godefrey was evidently a most useful and acceptable abbat; of unswerving celibacy, after

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—William pointedly says—after he became abbat. One, and only one fault, William cannot restrain himself from recording, but it was a terrible one. When William Rufus imposed an unbearably heavy tribute, to enable him to buy Normandy of his brother Robert, Godefrey, to make his payment easier, took the advice of the very worst men, and sold the treasures of the church which the piety of their predecessors had heaped together. William could name the men who gave the evil advice, if that could lessen the guilt of the abbat. On one day he sold twelve texts of the gospels, and eight crosses; eight shrines were stripped of their gold and silver. But he was rightly punished, for the proceeds were not nearly sufficient for his purpose, coming to only seventy-two marks, or, as we should say, but the change in the practical value makes the use of modern terms very misleading, forty-eight pounds. Dunstan had given eight or nine times as much for the bells. Not only did Godefrey's sacrilege miss its purpose, but he was himself smitten with the king's evil to a terrible extent, and so he died.

Among many smaller miracles or examples of faith cures which William records of his own knowledge, one or two have a local

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interest. A girl from Pucklechurch[1] with a spinal disease, a dumb man from Calne, and a blind woman from the same place, were cured at St. Aldhelm's shrine. But after all, William tells us, speaking of his own times, the wonderful works performed on the saint's feast day at his church at Wareham in Dorset were more remarkable than those at Malmesbury, and the offerings there were greater. William had wondered why. The conclusion he had arrived at was this. "The Almighty, I believe, indicated by these facts that to have the glory of possessing his body was enough and more than enough for the people of Malmesbury, and they must not envy others, who in this respect were less fortunate, the greater display of his miraculous powers." This is quite conclusive evidence that at least as late as 1125, long after the Normans had held the fortifications of Corfe Castle, the Saxon walls of Aldhelm's Church, "near Wareham, where Corfe Castle stands out over the

[1] There is still a St. Aldhelm's oak and well at Pucklechurch in the Gloucestershire part of the diocese of Bristol, about sixteen miles from Malmesbury. Pucklechurch (Pulchra Ecclesia) was a residence of the Saxon kings. It was in the hall of the royal abode that Leolf stabbed King Edmund the Elder, Alfred's grandson, in 946.

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sea," were still standing, were still without a roof, were still credited with showing forth a standing miracle. It is difficult to see how the tradition can have so entirely disappeared from the neighbourhood as it undoubtedly has.

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CHAPTER VIII

Athelstan and Malmesbury.—Rearrangements of the dioceses of Wessex from Aldhelm's time to the present.—The Abbey Church as it now exists.

THE natural strength of the hill of Malmesbury has been noticed in the second chapter. Its position is singularly like that of the Castle Hill of Bristol; itself, without a doubt, a British stronghold. In each case the river Avon protects a considerable portion of the prominence, and in each case a supplementary water, the Newnton brook at Malmesbury and the Frome at Bristol, completes the protection of the site, leaving a narrow neck or ridge between the encircling waters, and giving to the site the shape of a bulbous pear. The strength of the position is well seen when the train from Somerford to Malmesbury emerges from the tunnel and draws up at the station. The water which guards the site on this side is the Newnton brook. The narrowness of the neck or ridge may be seen as we walk up from the railway station, and come in sight of the west front of the Abbey Church. Looking

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down to the left, we have the ground falling steeply to the Newnton brook, on which side Aldhelm's well lies; while on the right, on which side is Daniel's well, it falls still more steeply to the level of the Avon. If we turn to the right before reaching the Abbey, and skirt the edge of the town, we notice the striking steepness at the King's Walk; descend sharply to the Avon at St. John's Hospital; turn to the left and reach the bridge over the Newnton brook, with its interesting circular tower; admire the strength of the natural defences, under which the priests' walk winds; and, keeping still to the left, pass up by the very striking entrance called the Hollow Way, and so complete our circuit by coming again to the Abbey precincts.

It will be noticed that the houses of Malmesbury are strictly included within the natural boundaries of the place, anything which lies outside being modern. This is one of the most interesting facts of the ancient borough. It is due to the conditions of King Athelstan's famous gift of a large area of common land to Malmesbury. The men of the place had given signal help to the king at a crisis of one of his battles, when he called on Saint Aldhelm for aid. In return, he gave them a considerable

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estate towards Norton and Foxley, and a charter still in force. The conditions are, that the commoners shall live within the walls of the town, and that a man can only become a commoner in right of being the son of a commoner, or in right of marriage with a commoner's daughter. Hence the town has not spread out into the country. Athelstan's conditions have had another effect: they have naturally preserved the physical type of the commoners singularly unchanged for a thousand years. The present writer, on one occasion, was speaking at the old council chamber on this subject, and informed his audience that Malmesbury came second only to Devizes in the retention of the round skull of the British builders of Stonehenge. The senior warden of the old corporation drily remarked that they didn't know about the shape of their heads, but they reckoned to have as much inside 'em as most folk.

King Athelstan is still a very living personage at Malmesbury. The commoners still "dine with King Athelstan" once in each year. An old commoner, who was bedridden, was advised by the Vicar that he would be much better cared for in "the house." The receipt of poor's money terminates the common-

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right. The old man painfully raised himself in bed, and said solemnly: "King Arthelstan hath kept I all my life; King Arthelstan shall keep I till I die." See also page 358.

Athelstan's regard for Aldhelm, from whom he was separated by two centuries, was very great. He loved him both as his kinsman and as a holy man. He felt so bound to his service that he devoted to him his soul and his body. At the great fight with Anlaf at Brunanburh in 937, when Anlaf attacked in the night, and in the confusion of arming hurriedly Athelstan's sword dropped from its sheath and was lost, he called on God and the holy Aldhelm and a sword was put into his hand by miracle, which was long kept in the treasury of the kings. His first cousins, the princes Ælfwine and Æthelwine, to whom he was warmly attached, were killed in this battle. He ordered their bodies to be carried all the way to Malmesbury, probably from the banks of the Humber or its higher reaches where it is called the Ouse, and to be buried there on the right and the left of the altar in the church of St. Mary, Aldhelm's great church. It was probably in this battle that the men of Malmesbury rendered him assistance at a critical point, although those who have

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written on the subject desire to find some site for the battle much nearer Malmesbury. The reason for accepting Brunanburh as the battle is a simple one. In the *Gesta Regum* William tells us that when Anlaf made his night attack, he came first on the tents of a certain bishop, who had joined the army only the night before, and not knowing the nearness of the enemy had selected for his encampment a pleasant green spot. He with the whole of his followers was put to death as the Dane swept by to the English king's tents. In the *Gesta Pontificum* William tells us that this bishop was said to have been Werstan, Bishop of Sherborne. Thus Athelstan had with him at Brunanburh men of Dorset and Wilts, those *pagi*, along with Berks, forming the see of Sherborne, as William very distinctly states, after the great changes of the year 909, and before the formation of the see of Ramsbury, which followed almost immediately[1]. All that is needed is to suppose that the Malmesbury men disentangled themselves under cover of the darkness, fell back upon the king's position, and gave him news

[1] It is needless to say here that William's accounts of the rearrangement of sees are more or less confused and confusing.

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of the Danish assault just in time to save his life and his army.

Besides sending his favourite cousins to be buried in their kinsman Aldhelm's church, Athelstan gave to the abbey and its church many farms, many hangings, a cross of gold, filacteries of gold, and the piece of the true cross which Hugh, King of the Franks, had sent to him. When he died at Gloucester in 940, his body was brought to Malmesbury and buried there, under the altar of St. Mary, in the tower. An effigy, of later date, still remains in the Abbey Church, called by the name of Athelstan. The head has undoubtedly a royal crown of early date.

There are traditions of a great fight with the Danes only four or five miles from Malmesbury, at Sherston, and it is tempting to suggest that it may have been here that the men of Malmesbury succoured Athelstan. The prevailing idea that Sherston was the scene of Edmund Ironside's battle of 1017 does not accord with the statement that the combatants retired the night after the battle to Winchester and Old Sarum respectively. The hero of the Sherston fight was one Rattlebone, who killed a whole steading-full of Danes. When he received a terrible wound in the abdomen,

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he picked up a tile and kept it pressed upon the wound to keep the bowels from gushing out while he went on killing. At one part of the day he paused, thinking that he had done enough, but the people urged him by offers of great gifts, and the dialogue is still remembered in various graphic forms. The least graphic is that given by Aubrey, A.D. 1659–70:—

THE PEOPLE. Fight well, Rattlebone,
Thou shalt have Sherstone.

RATTLEBONE. What shall I with Sherstone doe,
Without I've all belongs thereto?

THE PEOPLE. Thou shalt have Wyck and Willesly,
Easton towne and Pinkeney.

The very early stone figure of a priest holding a large book to his breast, preserved at Sherston Church, is understood by the people to represent Rattlebone pressing the tile on his wound.

It will be well to say something here about the further subdivisions and re-unions which brought the West Saxon dioceses into their present form. There will not be space for more than an outline sketch.

As we have seen, the diocese of Sherborne, as given to Aldhelm, contained by far the largest part of the whole of the West Saxon land. If we may judge by the arrangements

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considered necessary when the next sub-division came, two hundred years later, the territories gradually acquired from the Damnonian Britons were understood to come under the bishops of Sherborne. Thus at the time when King Alfred died, his bishop Denewulf had the diocese of Winchester, say Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and his bishop Asser of Sherborne ruled Wilts, Dorset, Somerset, and Devon. Cornwall still had its own line of bishops, but they had before Alfred's reign come into communion with the church of the English, for we have the profession of obedience which Kenstec, the Bishop of Cornwall, made to Ceolnoth, Archbishop of Canterbury 833–870, according to the custom of bishops at that time. Mr. Warren, in his learned work on the Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church, remarks[1] that this profession of Kenstec was the only exception to the independence of the Cornish bishops down to the time of Athelstan. On the conquest of Cornwall by the Saxons, the British bishop Conan submitted to Archbishop Wulfhelm, and Athelstan recognized him and nominated him to the Cornish see of Bodmin in 936. We have the names of

[1] Page 4.

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six bishops of Cornwall, and the signatures of five of them, from 931 to 1046.

It will no doubt be interesting to some readers to see a translation of this profession of obedience by Kenstec, as a type of those curious documents. It runs thus:—

"In the name of God most high, and of our Lord Jesus Christ. I Kenstec, elected though humble and unworthy to the Episcopal seat in the Cornish nation in the monastery which is called in the language of the Brettons Dinnurrin, in the first place confess to thee, most holy father Ceolnod Archbishop, that without any doubting I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His Son, who was born of the chaste and pure Virgin and mother inviolate Mary, and suffered for the redemption and salvation of the human race. And in the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, to be together worshipped and glorified. That Holy Trinity and true Unity with mouth and heart and all, I worship and glorify and praise all the days of my life. And I profess to thee with all humbleness and sincere devotion, most pious and learned prelate, that in all things, without any scruple of false and frivolous imagining, I am ready

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to become, for all the term of my transitory life, the obedient poor servant and suppliant humble client of the holy see of the Dorovernian Church and of thee and thy successors. I Kenstec subscribe this with the confirmation under my own hand of the sign of the Cross of Christ."

How Devon fell ecclesiastically into the see of Sherborne is not clear. We have not, so far as I know, a list of British bishops of that district, which probably reached as far north as the Parret. Those who can in these days of ours distinguish and classify sounds not articulate to the ordinary visitor, tell us that the dialect on the north of that river, near its entrance into the Bristol Channel, is less intelligible than the dialect on the south. The earliest Saxon grant of land in Devonshire, as we now bound that county, appears to be one by Ethelwulf in 854. As regards Somerset, the Britons claim a succession of bishops at Congresbury, which they say was founded by Fagan and Duman and continued down to 721, when it was moved to a village called Tydenton, now Wells.

In 909, Asser Bishop of Sherborne died, and Alfred's son Edward carried out the further subdivision of the Wessex diocese

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by appointing four bishops in place of the one bishop of Sherborne, thus making five bishop's sees in the extended Wessex, in place of two[1]. The see of Winchester also was vacant at the time, so that the five Wessex bishops were all consecrated on one day by Archbishop Plegmund, along with bishops for two adjacent sees, Selsey and the northern Dorchester, afterwards Lincoln. The four sees into which the huge see of Sherborne was divided were, Sherborne for Dorset, Ramsbury for Wilts, Wells for Somerset, and Crediton, with three parishes in Cornwall[2], for Devon. The Anglo-Saxon lists which still survive call the see of Wells, Wellensis and Fontanensis. Ramsbury took its name from a raven, not from a ram, and it was called Corvinensis. It was poorly endowed and equipped, and the bishops' residence was sometimes at Sunning, whence the see was called also Sunningensis, sometimes at Wilton, whence its name Wiltunensis.

For our present purpose we can leave the

[1] William of Malmesbury says this was done by order of Pope Formosus. But the document quoted in support of this bears on its face the evidence of spuriousness.

[2] Leofric's missal gives the names of these parishes as Polltun, Coelling, and Landuuithan. These are identified with Pawton in St. Breoc, Callington, and Lawhitton.

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see of Wells to its own chequered history, and the see of Crediton to unite with it that of Cornwall in the person of Living, who was bishop of the joint sees from 1027 to 1046, and then to be moved as one see to Exeter in the person of Leofric who died in 1072. We have only to pursue the course of the Dorsetshire see of Sherborne, and the Wiltshire see of Ramsbury.

The latter, as has been said, was a poverty-stricken see. It was certainly rich in one respect. Few more beautifully ornamented fragments of Anglo-Saxon shafts and crosses and grave covers have been found than those which were brought out of an old wall of Ramsbury church ten or eleven years ago at the time of the restoration of that fine building. Some notes on these sculptured stones have been given in Chapter VI.

William of Malmesbury tells us the story of the union of the two sees of Sherborne and Ramsbury, and of the part which the abbey of Malmesbury played in it; and he tells the story in two different ways. Hermann, a native of Flanders, was made Bishop of Ramsbury in 1045, and he became Bishop of Sherborne in addition to Ramsbury in 1058. As Bishop of Ramsbury he endeavoured

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to move the see to Malmesbury, with the abbacy of Malmesbury as the bishop's portion. That is one of William's accounts. The other is that as bishop of both sees he endeavoured to move the two sees to Malmesbury, with the abbacy as before. I feel little doubt that he made the attempt both when he was first made Bishop of Ramsbury and also when he became Bishop of Sherborne as well. In the former case he had actually obtained the consent of Edward the Confessor, who in his simplicity, as William says, was always more ready to say yes than prudence would allow. His plea to the king, whose chaplain he was, was this. Ramsbury was very poor. There was no convent of clergy. There was no means of support. The previous bishops had been natives, they had relations, they had means. He was a foreigner, with no relations here to entertain him, no patrimony for his support. That plea moved the king to consent. But the monks of Malmesbury got wind of what was going on at court, and before Hermann could get actual possession of the abbacy, they went with full speed to Godwin, Earl of Wessex, and his son Harold. The earls were much annoyed by the unseemly novelty of the proceeding: they

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went to the king and induced him to change his mind. This, Malmesbury says, was an easy matter for them, for they were very great men, endued with the amplest authority; their cause was just; the king was facile. Hermann indignantly left England. But he was badly fed on the continent, and he heard that the Bishop of Sherborne was dead. Queen Eadgyth had long ago promised that he should have Sherborne as well as Ramsbury. He heard also that Godwin was dead, of whom he was very much afraid—here we have a touch of Godwin's dislike of the foreigners whom Edward introduced. He came back to England, and the Queen's promise was fulfilled. The other of William's stories is that the attempt upon Malmesbury was made when he thus became Bishop of Sherborne, seven or eight years before the Conquest, and that [Godwin and] Harold prevented it. In any case, it is clear that Malmesbury was the place at which it was desired to place the joint see. Hermann, being a foreigner, was not disturbed by the Conqueror. When the decree of 1078 came out, ordering that sees were to be moved from villages to towns, Hermann transferred the joint sees to Sarum, and became the first of

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the Bishops of Salisbury, with Wilts and Dorset as his see. In 1542 Henry VIII took away Dorset, by Charter under Act of Parliament, and gave it to Bristol. In 1836 an Act of Parliament restored Dorset to Salisbury, and gave to the see of Gloucester and Bristol eighty parishes of North Wilts in place of Dorset. A few years ago another Act of Parliament gave these parishes, which include Malmesbury, to the re-separated see of Bristol.

The successive changes in the arrangement of dioceses, from the time of Birinus of Wessex and Diuma of Mercia to the time of Queen Victoria, are to be illustrated in a very interesting manner at the Church Congress to be held at Bristol October 13–16, 1903. The single see of the West Saxons of Aldhelm's time, at Dorchester in the first instance and shortly after at Winchester, is now represented by the Bishops of Winchester, Bath and Wells, Salisbury, Exeter, Oxford, and part of Bristol. The South-west Britons of Aldhelm's time are represented by Exeter, Truro, Llandaff, St. David's. The Mercian see of Aldhelm's time is represented at its centre and in the parts toward Bristol by Lichfield, Worcester, Hereford, Gloucester, and Bristol. The occu-

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pants of all of the twelve sees named, other than Bristol, have promised to attend the Church Congress at Bristol, in recognition of the historical claim upon their support which the composite character of the see gives to its bishop.

A few words on the present condition of the Abbey Church of Malmesbury, built from 1150 to 1200 on the site of Aldhelm's great Saxon church, will not be out of place here.

The nave, which alone now remains, consisted of nine bays, with a singularly splendid south porch. The west front presented the appearance of a noble centre and highly ornamented west door, flanked by two square towers enriched with surface arcading. They were in fact not square towers: seen from the south or the north they were rectangular, the west face considerably wider than the south. Only one of these now remains, with rather less than half of the central part of the west front, including the southern portion of the great west door. The Norman arches from the nave, transepts, and chancel were magnificent examples of lofty round arches of very interesting design; two of them still remain. Ruin has befallen all the rest of the great church, except a part of the west face of the

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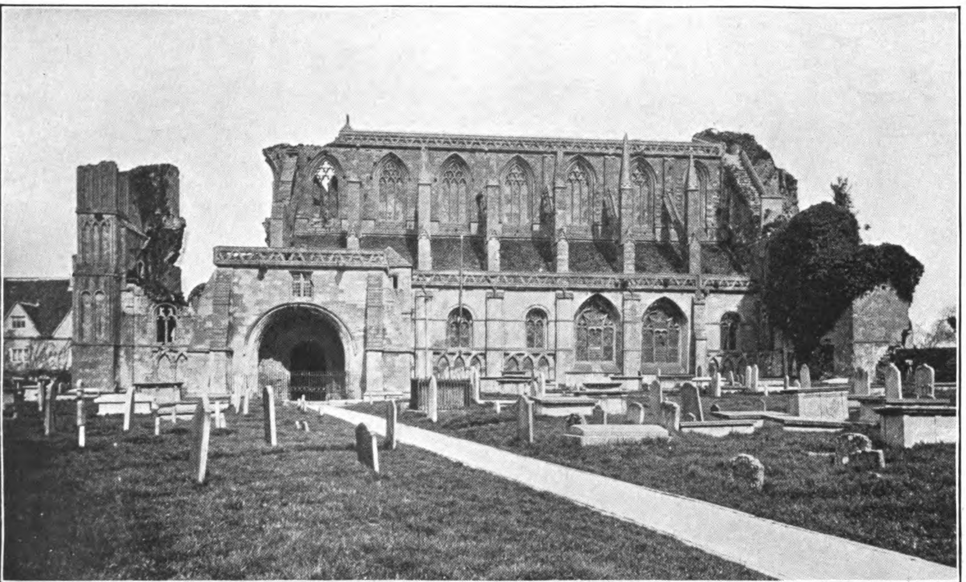

19. THE ABBEY CHURCH, MALMESBURY, IN 1900

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south transept. There is some surface decoration, both medallions and diamonds. Figures 19 and 20 show the fabric as it was in 1900.

At the Reformation, Cranmer issued a document authorising the use of the nave of the Abbey Church as the Parish Church of Malmesbury, in place of the Church of St. Paul, then in ruins except the tower which still stands. The central tower and spire of the Abbey Church, higher than Salisbury, had fallen before that time, as had also a western tower, an ill-built addition of the fifteenth century. A further catastrophe destroyed the northern half of the west front, and completed the ruins of the three western bays, in the time of Charles II. From that time till the end of the nineteenth century, the state of the fabric has caused growing anxiety, especially because if another catastrophe came the south porch must be ruined, an irreparable loss.

The last three years have seen the fabric made sound. The frontispiece shows the result on the south. The roofs of the aisles have been stripped and relaid; the flying buttresses taken down one by one, and built again with the old stones, a process revealing the mere thread by which some of them were held together; the compensating

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pinnacles have been completely repaired; the gutters put in order; and the drainage for the first time made effective. The treatment of the ruined bays at the west of the nave presented difficult problems. It was necessary to introduce heavy buttresses, to prevent the collapse of the south-west corner of the present church; but any buttresses of an ordinary character would have been ugly and expensive, and must have been removed again if at any time the county rebuilt the ruined bays. It was determined that all the money spent upon the west end should be to the good, if the bays were ever rebuilt. On that principle it was determined to effect the buttressing in the most complete manner, by building the perished piers and half-arches of the south aisle and arcade, and thus supporting the thrust of the unsupported and overhanging masses of ruin at the south-west corner of the present church and at the east side of the south-west tower. Extreme care has been taken to leave the new work without mouldings; to alter the cuspings of the parapets; and in all ways to render it impossible that the new work shall ever be thought to be part of the original work. The southern tower at the west end, the upper part of which was in a very ruinous state, has been

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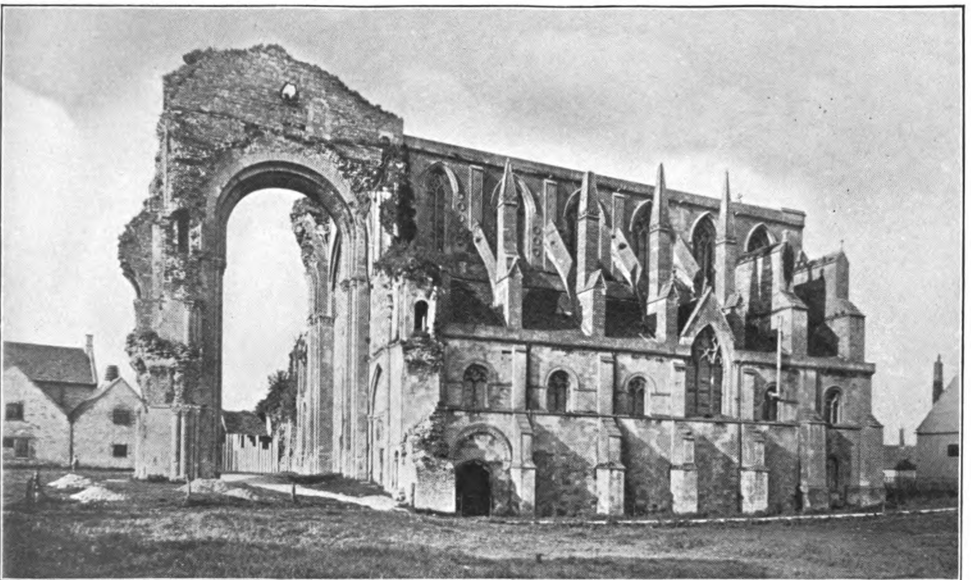

20. THE ABBEY CHURCH, MALMESBURY, IN 1900

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finished off square at the top, a few feet of new work being added to give headway for access to the roof by the spiral staircase still remaining in that tower; the view from the top is very interesting. The whole has been managed with great skill by the architect, Mr. Brakspear, and at the moderate cost of £5,000, of which about £1,000 has still to be raised. The frontispiece shows the interior.

One feature of rather remarkable interest has characterised the execution of the modern work. The great blocks of Bath stone which have been brought to Malmesbury and sawn up to build the singularly massive Norman pier and half arches, with the corresponding portions of the clerestory and triforium, forming in fact the system of buttressing, have all come to Malmesbury marked "St. Aldhelm." That is the registered trade-mark of the Bath Stone firms; and it is derived from a tradition mentioned by Aubrey (A. D. 1659–70)[1]. In describing Haselbury, in the parish of Box, where is one of the most famous quarries of Bath stone, Aubrey says:—

"*Haselbury Quarre* is not to be forgott; it is the eminentest free-stone quarrey in the

[1] Canon Jackson's edition of Aubrey's *Wilts*, A.D. 1862, p. 58.

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west of England, Malmesbury and all round the country of it[1]. The old men's story, that St. Adelme, riding over there, threw down his glove, and bade them digge and they should find great treasure, meaning the Quarry."

Mr. E. A. Ponting informs me that the stone first worked was the Bradford stone, a less fine oolite than the Bath stone, with larger shells. It is of this, he tells me, that the little church at Bradford, the Saxon arch still remaining in the Norman church of Sherborne, and the sculptured stones at Ramsbury, are composed. The tradition recorded by Aubrey supports Mr. Ponting's view that the Bradford quarry was worked first. Aldhelm was very particular about his orders for material, as we see from his miracle of the Beam, and he no doubt studied the character of the ground from which he got his stone. Haselbury lay between Malmesbury and Bradford, and we may suppose that on one of his journeys he noticed some surface indications which suggested the existence of a rich quarry of fine stone. The Bath Stone firms include his glove in their trade-mark, but it is a military gauntlet of iron, not the decorative leather glove of an abbat or a bishop.

[1] Apparently a corrupt passage, capable of emendation.

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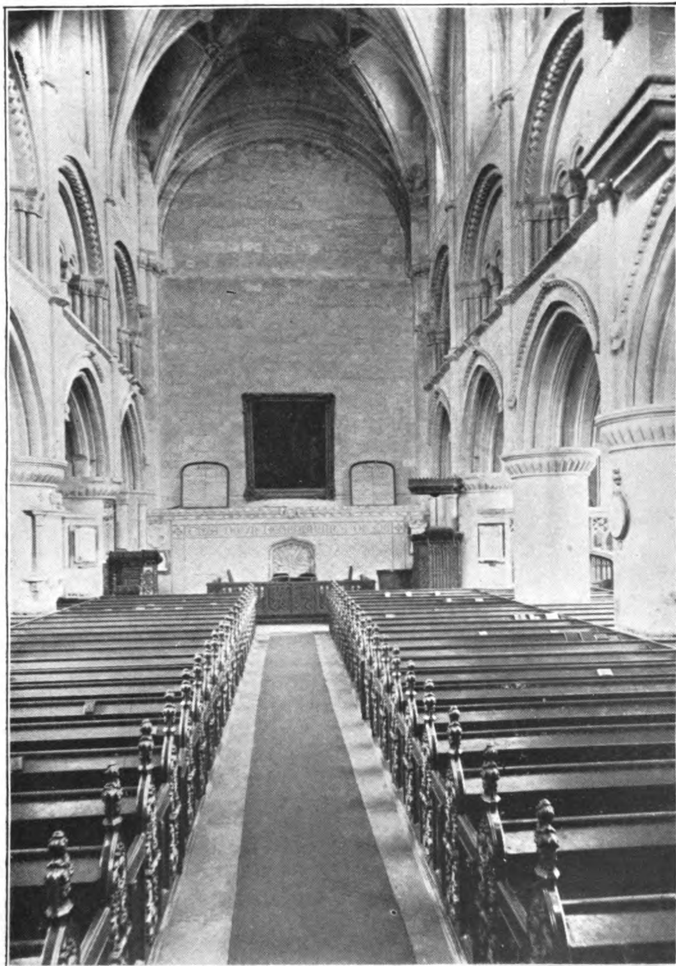

21. INTERIOR OF THE ABBEY CHURCH, MALMESBURY
LOOKING EAST

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CHAPTER IX

Three of Aldhelm's Sacred Hymns :—On the Basilica built by Bugge, the daughter of a King of England ; On the Altars dedicated to the Blessed Mary and the Twelve Apostles; On entering the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul.

WE may now turn to those of Aldhelm's writings which have come down to us, beginning with three of his sacred hymns.

The first is a dedicatory Ode on the Consecration of a Basilica built by a daughter of King Centwine in the time of King Ina. As it is comparatively short, eighty-five hexameter lines, we may as well have a rough rendering of the whole poem.

"This temple with its fair structure the noble daughter of King Centwine reared. He ruled the empire of the Saxons, until, thinking little of the heights of an earthly reign, he left the riches of this world and the reins of power, raising on many a field new basilicas where now the servants of Christ keep the monastic rule. Then he passed on to seek the sanctified life, leaving his own kingdom for the name of Christ. In his

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earlier days he had fought three campaigns, and brought them to an end in three victories. Thus he reigned prosperously for many years till he passed to the kindly cell. Thence, bright with merits, he sought the realms above, led by angelic hosts to the heights of heaven, where now in union with them that dwell there he rejoices in his lot."

King Centwine's reign is involved in some mystery. Bede apparently had some information which did not tally with the statements of the Chronicle. Aldhelm's remarks support the Chronicle[1], and show Centwine as King in the full sense, not merely an irregular ruler in a time of anarchy. We do not know anything of the three campaigns and three decisive victories to which Aldhelm refers; but the Chronicle is quite definite in regard to one of them, its whole entry under the year 682 (or 683) being—"In this year Centwine drove the Bret Welsh (Bret Wealas) as far as the sea." This, no doubt, was the great defeat of the Damnonian Britons, the people of Devon and the southern parts of Somerset, to which William of Malmesbury refers in his account

[1] A.D. 676. Centwine succeeded to the kingdom of the West Saxons. See also page 327.

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of Aldhelm's letter to the British[1]. Mr. Plummer, in his notes on Bede, *H.E.* iv. 12, suggests that Centwine may have been forced into a monastery by his victorious successor, Ceadwalla. The Chronicle is completely silent as to the time or manner of his ceasing to reign. Aldhelm skilfully keeps to the policy of non-committal, though he certainly knew all about it, being Abbat of Malmesbury throughout Centwine's reign of nine or ten years (676–685). In his letter to the clergy of Wilfrith, given in Chapter III, he avows himself a supporter of Ceadwalla. Possibly the word *hœres*, heir, which he applies to Ceadwalla in the poem, is meant to indicate that he was a legitimist. We may now proceed.

"After him King Ceadwalla succeeded, famous in war and in arms, the mighty holder and heir[2] of the kingdom. But he soon left the empire of the world and the sceptre, to plough with curved ships the turgid waves and pass through the æquorial plains of the sea. The white sails crackled

[1] See Chapter XII.

[2] If primogeniture had been the rule of succession in those times, Ceadwalla stood much above Centwine in order of claim.

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under the gusts of wind, until the bark beat the shore with rude beak. Then he climbed the cloud-capped Alps, hedged about with masses of snow and the summits of the mountains. Kindly Rome rejoiced at his coming, and the clergy of the Church were glad, when he, happy, merited mersion in the waters of baptism. While still clad in his white robes he was seized with disease and breathed out his mortal life, seeking the lofty realms of the poles above, mounting to the clear height of starry Olympus."

Of this visit to Rome, and the mark which it left there, further notice will be found in Chapter IV.

"The third ruler to receive the noble sceptre was he whom the nations call by the well-known cognomen of Ina, who now guides by right[1] the empire of the Saxons. In his reign, Bugge, the suppliant servant of

[1] In the second generation from Cerdic there were four brothers of the royal house. The oldest of them, Ceawlin, reigned from 560 to 592, when his line was deprived of the sovereignty, and six descendants of the third brother, Cutha, reigned. Ceadwalla's claim harked back to Ceawlin's line, as also did Ina's. After five sovereigns whose claim cannot be clearly traced, Ecgbert emerged as king, and his family retained the kingship. He was the heir, in the fourth generation, of Ina's brother Ingild.

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Christ, constructed a new shrine, a lofty fabric, where sacred altars shine under twice six names and above (or in addition) the altar of the virgin consecrates the apse. Therefore let us all with triumph celebrate this day, and sing to Christ the God alternate hymns. The monthly seasons roll on with successive feasts, and lustres of years shall whirl in appointed course. Let antiphons with sweet accents strike the ear, and the ode of psalms clang with the double trumpet. Let the voice of the hymnist ring out frequent and articulate, and shake the lofty roof with vigorous song. Let us, brothers, praise the Almighty with accordant voice, and the band of sisters join with us in frequent song. Let us give forth under the vault of the temple hymns and psalms and festal responsories, making melody with the modulations of the psaltery, and strike as the psalmist bids the ten-stringed lyre. Let each one adorn the new shrine with voice, and the brother or sister who reads, the lector, or lectrix [1], untie the sacred volumes. For this

[1] This, as the "band of sisters" above, evidently points to a double monastery, of monks and nuns, governed by Bugge; it was an arrangement which found favour among the Hwiccas.

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great day, on which the Church's festival shines forth, the Virgin Mary has hallowed by her nativity; which the times of August renew each year, when the burning sextile month is divided in mid orb; bringing renewed gladness to our mind, when in its turn the solemn feast of Mary returns, and the sacred altars blaze with pious gifts."

This mention of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, as occurring in the middle of August, is for more than one reason at first sight puzzling. August 15 is the Festival of the Assumption. The Festival of the Nativity is on September 8. There has been no variation from these dates, nor any confusion between the two festivals. Moreover, both festivals were of comparatively late introduction, so late that the mention of either of them by Aldhelm as a fully recognized festival would be worthy of special note. Both festivals come from tainted sources, especially that of the Assumption, which was an invention of gnostic heretics and was brought into the Church on the evidence of a series of forgeries. Gregory of Tours accepted the story of the Assumption, writing in or about the year 590. So late as the time of Charles the Great, that Sovereign

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appears to have received the Festival only after deliberation, and it was only fully recognized by his son Louis (800–840). The Festival of the Nativity rests on a different basis, for while there never was an Assumption of the Virgin in the sense of the heretics and the forgeries, the Nativity was a natural fact, and the only invention was that of the actual day. Pope Sergius I. is said to have instituted the Festival in the year 695, later, almost certainly, than Aldhelm's poem, on the representation of a "religious" who told the Pope he had for years heard the angels singing on the eighth of September, and it had been revealed to him that they sang because on that day the Virgin Mary was born. This festival did not appear in the Calendars of Charles the Great or of his son Louis.

We can now see how interesting Aldhelm's remark is. He had heard that August 15 had become or was becoming marked as a festival in honour of the Virgin, but he had not heard of the Festival of the Assumption in connection with it. He had heard of the Nativity of the Virgin, but he had not heard of September 8 in connection with it. He combined the natural fact of the Nativity

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with the day marked as the Festival of the Virgin, August 15.

Bede has a poem of sixty-eight lines, *On the Natal day of the Holy Mother of God*, but it does not contain any reference to the Nativity, nor any hint of the date of the day. It is, however, very interesting to note that in Bede's treatise on the Natal days of Saints he enters on August 15 *S. Mariae dormitio*, "the falling asleep of the Holy Mary." The development had been rapid.

Aldhelm's poem proceeds to its close as follows.

"This house is resplendent with serene light, the sun shining through its windows of glass, and diffusing limpid light through the four-square temple. Very many are the ornaments of the new basilica. The golden pallia glow yellow with their woven threads [1], the fair clothing of the sacred altar. The golden chalice flashes with gems, as the heavens glow with blazing stars. There stands the broad paten, formed of silver, bearing the divine remedies of our life, for by the Body

[1] It is not improbable that this refers to hangings woven throughout of gold thread, as in the case of Ina's pall at Glastonbury and Frithestan's stole at Winchester; see Chapter VII.

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of Christ and his Sacred Blood are we fed. Here is the splendour of the Cross with its plates of gold and silver adorned with gems. Here too the thurible, girt all round with capitals, hangs from on high, opening its perforations, through which the Sabæan incense shall breathe forth ambrosia when the priests are instructed to offer mass. Now let illustrious glory be assigned to the unbegotten Father, and glory not less be offered to the begotten Son, and let the Holy Spirit enjoy constant praise."

We naturally try to determine where this basilica was built, and to know something more of the lady who built it.

There were two ladies of this not very euphonious name[1] in the early Anglo-Saxon

[1] The Old-English word Bugge came to mean a thing of terror. Coverdale's Bible renders Ps. xc(i). 5, *affrayed for eny bugges by night.* Speed, in his *History of Great Britain*, says of the opponents of the married clergy, that "women in those days were great bugs in their eyes." A humbug, or hum bug, is a sham bogie. The use of the word as a personal name for ladies makes it clear that it had originally a complimentary sense; probably it meant a fairy, a sprite, and thence a ghost, this last being the meaning of the Welsh *bwg*. It is well known that Bug has been an English surname down to our own times, and is in fact the surname of some families of ancient descent which now bear territorial names; thus Richard Bugge bought property (43 Henry III) in Willoughby,

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times. The late Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Stubbs, gave an account of them in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, and identifies the builder of this basilica with the later of the two, the third abbess of Minster in Thanet, who died after 751. To this identification that author, most learned and ever to be regretted, was no doubt led by the fact that the poem of Aldhelm was in error included among the poems of Alcuin, who was born in 735 at the earliest. Inasmuch as Ina was king at the time when the poem was written, and Ina died in 726, it is quite clear that Alcuin could not have written it; however precocious and however unmakable he may be, after all a poet has to be born. When once the poem is recognized as not Alcuin's, its place among Aldhelm's poems is unchallenged.

Identifying this lady with the abbess of Minster, Dr. Stubbs, who knew the period better than any one else, found no difficulty in reconciling the two statements, (1) that Bugge was the daughter of King Centwine, (2) that she was the daughter of the Abbess

and his son, who bought Wollaton, became Richard de Wyllebi. We get a hint of an old pronunciation of Bugge in the armorial bearing of three budgets.

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Eangyth. It must be frankly confessed that a study of the morals of the time does not show that to be an unsurmountable difficulty, the dignity of abbess following sometimes upon an early life less well spent than the years of the religious life.

Curiously enough, both of the two ladies named Bugge were daughters of abbesses, and this fact has rendered the above remarks necessary. Rejecting the identification of the basilica-builder with the daughter of the Abbess Eangyth, on the ground of her late date, and of the absence of connecting links between Aldhelm and Minster, we must turn to Bugge, the daughter of the Abbess Dunne. The dates of the facts which are certain in her story exactly suit her time as indicated in Aldhelm's poem. The story is worth relating in itself, as showing the mischiefs attaching to the over-development of the monastic system and the hereditary descent of abbacies, to which Bede called such marked attention towards the close of his life. If we accept this earlier dedication, we know where the basilica was, and we bring it within twenty miles of Malmesbury instead of endeavouring to find it in far-off Thanet. We also re-establish the reputation of a

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lady whose character has been unnecessarily vilified.

King Ethelred of Mercia, the third of the sons of the old pagan King Penda who ruled over the whole or part of Mercia, gave, in concert with Oshere, his sub-king in Gloucestershire, and at Oshere's request, certain lands on which a monastery was to be built. Ethelred's reign extended over the years 675 to 704, and Oshere is known to have been sub-king of the Hwiccas in 680 and 693. That is as near to the date as we can get. It will be seen at a glance how well these dates suit for a close connection with Aldhelm, and for the relationship between King Centwine, who died in 685, and the ladies to whom the grant was made. They were two nuns, Dunne and her daughter Bucge. The Latin charter of forty years later, in which the story is found, following the Latin construction, puts their names in the genitive and dative case of the Anglo-Saxon names, Dunnan and Bucgan, whence some contrariety in the spelling of their names in modern times [1]. The land was on the river Tillath, now the Colne, at the spot where now the village of Withington is,

[1] Archbishop Boniface treated the name of his correspondent, the other Bugga, in the same way.

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about twenty miles north of Malmesbury, through Cirencester. There is no reason why Aldhelm may not have visited the place as a neighbouring abbat, and hymned the beauty of the basilica built there by Dunne and Bucge. The whole hangs together unusually well—date, place, and circumstance.

When Dunne was dying, she willed the monastery, over which she then ruled alone, as though Bucge was dead, with its lands and the charter of donation, to the daughter of her daughter. But because her grand-daughter was a child, she enjoined upon the married mother of the child the duty of keeping the charter and the management of the monastery for her daughter till she should come of age. It has been carelessly assumed that this mother must of course have been Bucge. When in the course of time the grand-daughter came of age, and asked for the charter, the mother declared that it had been stolen, and would not give up the monastery. The matter was felt to be so serious that it was brought, in the year 736 or 737 [1], before the episcopal synod of the province of Canter-

[1] It will be seen that these dates will suit the coming of age of a grand-daughter of King Centwine, or of the niece of his daughter.

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bury. There were present Nothelm, Archbishop of Canterbury; Daniel, Bishop of Winchester; Wor, Bishop of Lichfield; Ingwald, Bishop of London; Wilfrith, Bishop of Worcester; Cuthbert, Bishop of Hereford; Forthere, the outgoing Bishop of Sherborne, and Herewald the new Bishop, and two others, ten bishops in all. The whole of the venerable Council, with the most reverend Archbishop Nothelm, decreed that the charter of donation, whether of the king and sub-king or of Dunne the handmaid of God, must be restored to the Abbess Hrotwari (the grand-daughter), and that her possession of the monastery was assured. Condemnation, and the anathema of the most sacred synod, was decreed against the person who had presumed fraudulently to take away the charter, whether by theft or by any other means. Finally, the sacred synod decreed that at the death of Hrotwari, as her fore-bears had determined, the book and the land should fall to the episcopal see of Worcester; this last decree took effect in 774[1].

It seems to me clear from the above record that Bucge had died in Dunne's lifetime,

[1] This date of Hrotwari's death well fits in with the rest of the story and the connection with Centwine, who was in early middle age in 685.

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leaving her mother in sole possession and rule of the monastery, and that it was because of Bucge's death that Dunne left the possessions to a grand-daughter, the daughter of another of Dunne's daughters, a married woman. The contrast between the description of Bucge as *sanctimonialis*, and of Hrotwari's mother as *maritata*, is much too wide and clear to justify the statement of the very learned writer already referred to, that it was Bucge who "was only dislodged by the decree of a Council in 736 or 737."

As the story points to the special value of the possession of the land-book, or schedule of lands, as the visible title to the estate, I may add here that these land-books were sometimes called telligraphs, a word which sounds curiously modern; as in fact does the other and much better known name of later mediaeval times, terrier. Both names evidently mean written lists of the lands comprised in an estate. The Council held at Cealchyth (Chelsea) in 816 passed among other decrees one of which the title sounds rather startling at a date 1100 years ago, "that monasteries be not deprived of their telligraphs."

The poem to which we turn next is called

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a Poem on the Altars dedicated to the Blessed Mary and the Twelve Apostles. This may refer to the same church, for it had the same number of altars with the same inscriptions; or it may refer to the great church of St. Mary at Malmesbury itself, though we do not actually know that Aldhelm, in building that church, made the same arrangement of the altars which he evidently admired in Bugge's basilica.

The order in which the persons to whom the altars were dedicated are mentioned is as follows, the numbers after the names showing the number of verses assigned to each: the Virgin Mary (31), St. Peter (36), St. Paul (36), St. Andrew (16), St. James (14), St. John (19), St. Thomas Didymus (25), St. James the Lord's cousin (36), St. Philip (18), St. Bartholomew (14), St. Matthew (20), St. Simon Zelotes (10), St. Thaddeus (27), St. Matthias (13). It will be seen that St. Matthias is numbered among the twelve Apostles, and that St. Paul is added to the twelve. St. Paul is placed second, and is honoured in as many verses as St. Peter and St. James, no one else, not even the Virgin Mary having so many. This equalizing of the reverence paid to St. Peter and St. Paul is a marked feature

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of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. Notwithstanding this insertion of St. Paul, at the conclusion of the poem Aldhelm says, "I have now gone through the twelve names of the Fathers"; he has gone through thirteen.

It is difficult to see any distinction of treatment as among the thirteen names. The verses describe their trials and their works. In another poem, next to be referred to, we have more opportunity for determining the relative places of the two chief Apostles, or Princes of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. In the present poem, the Virgin Mary is urged to hear mercifully the prayers of the people, who moisten the ground with their tears and beat the earth with bended knee, earning pardon by the fount of tears and blotting out the sins of life by frequent prayers. No such address is made to any one of the thirteen who are honoured next; but at the end Aldhelm prays them all to lighten the burden of his sins and loose his offences by pardon, that relying on divine grace[1] he may ultimately reach heaven.

[1] His hexameter line ends with *Divina gratia fretus*! Aldhelm would often have been whipped for taking liberties with long and short syllables, in the wholesome times of English schools.

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Bede appears to have known this poem. He uses one of Aldhelm's lines on Judas Iscariot—

Culmen Apostolici celsum perdebat honoris;

and half a line from the verses on Thomas Didymus, where our Lord is spoken of as

Coeli qui sceptra gubernat.

The third of Aldhelm's sacred hymns is described in his collected works as a poem written by him on entering the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul at Rome. Which of the churches of Rome that was, is not explained. In England it was a frequent dedication in those early times, when a dedication to St. Peter alone was, to say the least, very rare[1]. The earliest dedications of churches by the Italians of Augustine's band to single saints were to St. Andrew (Rochester) and St. Paul (London); the earliest dedication in which St. Peter was named was the dedication of the Abbey Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, afterwards St. Augustine's, Canterbury. The first known dedication in which

[1] On the unhistorical assertions of the Roman bishops in these islands a few years ago, with respect to dedications to St. Peter alone, see *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, pp. 51–54.

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St. Peter alone is named is that of the Cathedral Church of York, a generation later.

William of Malmesbury incorporates this poem in his Life of Aldhelm, and states positively that it was composed on the occasion of the dedication of the new and larger church which Aldhelm had built at Malmesbury in honour of the Saviour and the chief Apostles[1] Peter and Paul.

"Here, in this fair place, Peter and Paul, the lights of a dark world, the chief Fathers who guide the reins of the people, are venerated with frequent song.

"Key-bearer of heaven, who openest the portal of the upper air, and unclosest the white realms of the Thunderer of the skies, mercifully hear the vows of the people who pray, moistening the dry ground with showers of tears[2]. Accept the sobs of those who groan for their offences, who burn up with frequent prayer the sins of their life. Lo! thou greatest Doctor, Paul, called from

[1] Primorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli; a noteworthy statement of equality. Anastasius, in his Life of Leo III (Muratori, iii. 200), says that the pope made three golden images, of the Saviour and Peter and Paul, *beatorum principum*.

[2] Three verses here are common to this poem and the one preceding. See also p. 332.

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the heavens Saul (now with changed name Paul) when thou didst aim at setting the old law above Christ, and after darkness didst begin to see the clear light; open now benignant ears to the voice of them that pray, and as their guardian stretch forth with Peter thy right hand to the trembling ones, who flock to the sacred thresholds of the church; that here may be granted continuous indulgence of offences, flowing from abundant piety and the fount on high which never through the ages grows sluggish for men of worth."

William of Malmesbury has preserved for us yet another poem on the relative merits of St. Peter and St. Paul. In his monograph on the Antiquities of the Church of Glastonbury, he tells us that King Ina of Wessex, on the advice of Aldhelm as we learn elsewhere, built a church at Glastonbury and dedicated it to the Saviour and the Apostles Peter and Paul. Enough has been said already on that thoroughly English dedication. Further, Ina set up an inscription in Latin elegiacs which William records, evidently as in existence in his time: this gives yet another great Saxon Church spared by the Norman architects for many years. The inscription is for the most

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part a comparison between the two Apostles. It is difficult to see who other than Aldhelm, in that age and in that land, could have written the verses; but the genius of Aldhelm was on the whole too pompatic to be pleased with the lilt of pentameters; and it must be confessed that if Aldhelm was the author, he produced a copy of verses much more smooth and elegant than was his wont. The substance of ten of the lines of the poem is as follows:

Two gates of the heavens, two lights of the wide world,
Paul thunders with voice, Peter lightens from the sky.

The one loftier in degree, the other more learned in teaching.
The hearts of men are opened by the one, the stars by the other;
Whom the one teaches with the pen the other receives in the pole.
The one opens the way to heaven with teaching, the other with keys;
To whom Paul is the way to him Peter is the trusty gate.
The one remains the firm stone, the other is the architect.

Against the hostile torch two bulwarks rise—
The city the head of the world has these its towers of faith.

It is worth while, in this connection, to turn to Bede's poems, and see what he has

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to say on this subject of the relative claims of St. Peter and St. Paul.

In the preface to his long poem on the Miracles of St. Cuthbert, he speaks of the several parts of the earth made illustrious by the presence of Apostles and other great teachers. He begins with Rome, and all that he says of Rome is this:—

Rome, delighting in the twin splendour of Peter and Paul,
Will ever live rejoicing in the trophies of the Apostles.

That, beyond all doubt, is the true statement of the religious claims of Rome upon the affection of religious minds in the ages of which we are speaking; as the Imperial position of Rome as the centre of the Empire of Rome was the secret of its secular preeminence.

In a special poem of more than ninety lines "On the Apostles Peter and Paul," commencing impartially thus

Apostolorum gloriam
Hymnis canamus debitis,

The glory of the Apostles
Let us sing in due verse,

he carefully and ingeniously balances the claims and merits of the two, and gives the

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palm to both equally. Both, he says, drew by their teaching the various errors of the nations to the grace of truth. The sacred Prince of the Church saw Jesus in the mount and heard the voice of the Father from the fiery sky; Paul ascended to the third heaven of the bright pole and heard hidden things which it is not lawful to utter to any other. The steps of Cephas on the waves are aided by the right hand of Christ, who raises his own that they be not drowned in the sea of the world; Paul showed that the dangers of the world can be overcome by the faith of them that believe, when he saved from the waves his shipwrecked companions. After two more parallels of this character, introducing the good fishes and the tent-making, the miracles of the lame man and of the handkerchiefs, Bede continues thus:—"Peter desires to follow the footsteps of Christ, to reach whom he dreads not by the cruel ladder of the cross; Paul enters the palace of the heavenly realm by the sword, for who fears God gladly gives his head to the steel. Thus the Princes of the Church, thus the true lights of the world, by noble triumph over death received the palm of glory; whose illustrious trophies happy Rome now contains.

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whose crowns the circuit of the whole earth celebrates."

The complete absence of even the faintest allusion to the Petrine claims as developed in the dark ages is a noteworthy fact.

It may be of interest to give a translation of the Collect, Secreta, and Postcommunio, for the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul, found in the so-called Gregorian Missal of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, now preserved in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, No. 270, edited by Mr. Martin Rule. The Collect is as follows:—"O God, whose right hand raised the blessed Peter, walking on the waves, so that he should not sink, and saved from the depth of the sea his co-Apostle Paul when shipwrecked for the third time, mercifully hear us, and grant that by the merits of both we may attain to the glory of eternity: who, with God the Father, &c." The Secreta is as follows:—"We offer unto Thee, Lord, prayers and gifts; and that they may be worthy of Thy sight, we beseech the help of the prayers of Thine Apostles Peter and Paul: through, &c." And the Postcommunio:—"Protect, O Lord, Thy people; and preserve them with perpetual defence who trust in the patronage of Thine Apostles Peter and Paul; through, &c."

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CHAPTER X

Aldhelm's letter to an Irishman.—John the Scot.—Aldfrith.—Concourse of English students to Ireland.—Connection between England and Ireland.—Origin of our Coronation Service.

INASMUCH as Aldhelm was himself taught in youth by an Irishman, it was only natural that he should keep up some connection with Ireland. That he was highly regarded by Irish scholars we have seen already from the letter addressed to him by Cellanus, an Irishman living at Peronne. We can now turn to a similar letter, written to him by an Irishman who desired to study under him.

"The letter of a certain anonymous Scot to Aldhelm, abbat of Malmesbury.

"To the lord Aldhelm, holy, most wise, to Christ most dear, a Scot of name unknown sends greeting in the Eternal God.

Knowing how you excel in intellect, in Roman eloquence, and in the varied flowers of letters after the manner of the Greeks, I would rather learn from thy mouth, the purest fount of knowledge, than drink from any other

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spring, the turbid Master[1] especially. Know this to begin with, that I confidently beseech thee to take me and teach me, because the brightness, it is said, of wisdom shines in thee beyond many lecturers; and thou understandest the minds of foreigners who desire to acquire knowledge: for thou hast been to Rome, and besides thou wast thyself taught by a certain holy man of our race. Let this serve as a summary of reasons; if thou wilt charitably listen, thou wilt see as much from a few words as from a large amount of sermonizing. This also in sincerity I submit to thee. Thou hast a certain book, which is not more than an occupation[2] for two weeks; I wish to read it. This, however, I bespeak for a short time; not because I do not need it longer, but for fear lest my request should create an unfavourable impression in thy mind. A servant, also, and horses, I suppose I shall get. This next

[1] Turbulento Magistro. We have many examples of honorific titles assigned to teachers—doctor seraphic, doctor irrefragable, and so on; the text may perhaps suggest that certain teachers were marked by labels of an opposite character, at least by Irish students.

[2] The Latin word, *acceptorio,* puzzles Du Cange. The probable meaning is that one desiring to read it need not borrow it, or receive it, for more than a fortnight, or that it does not contain matter for more than a fortnight's study.

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harvest I shall hope to receive from thee a favourable reply. May Divine Grace deign to keep thee, so long as thou prayest for me."

It is a curiously characteristic letter from one of the Irish race. The writer must have had great confidence in the skill of the Post Office of his time. He expected that a book which he did not name, beyond saying that it was a fortnight's business, would reach him safely with the sole address, *To an anonymous Scot.* The inconsequent and happy-go-lucky finish, "I suppose I shall get a servant and horses," is another characteristic touch; as also is the bargain at the end for Aldhelm's prayers on an equitable basis of mutual help.

The letter concludes with twenty-one hexameter lines addressed to Christ. They are at least as good as Aldhelm's own verses.

There is a letter of some length from Aldhelm to a Saxon, Eahfrid by name, who had lately returned from a six-years' course of study in Ireland. This letter ought to have been of more interest than it is, but it gives us a general idea of the frequency of visits of Englishmen to Irish seats of learning, and it gives us a quite remarkable account of the behaviour of Irish students in England. It is tryingly, totally, terribly, turgid. Allitera-

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tive and abusive angriness is apt to one speaking of it, as its initial sentence may serve to show:—"Primitus pantorum procerum praetorumque pio potissimum paternoque praesertim privilegio panegyricum poemataque passim prosatori sub polo promulgantes." Some extracts may be given from this letter.

"We have heard from newsmongers that you have arrived safe at the ambrosial shores of British territory, having left the wintry climes and storms of the island of Hibernia; where for a triple two-years' period you have drawn nourishment from the udder of wisdom.

"Our ears have been shaken by assertions, beyond the bounds of mere rumour, of those who dwell on Scotic soil, with whom you yourself have abode, assertions like peals of thunder issuing from crashing clouds; and through many and wide stadia of the land, the opinion spreads over districts and provinces and grows in force. The coming and going of those who pass by the ships-track, the whirlpools of the sea, thence and hence, thither and hither, is so frequent, that it resembles some brotherhood of bees, busily storing the nectar in the comb.

"I, miserable little man, revolved these things as I wrote them down; and I was

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tortured by an anxious question. Why, say I, should Ireland, whither students, ship-borne, flock together in summer, why should Ireland be exalted by some ineffable privilege? As though here, on the fertile turf of Britain, teachers Greek and Roman could not be found, who, solving the severe problems of the celestial library, are able to unlock them to enquiring smatterers. The fields of Ireland are rich in learners, and green with the pastural numerosity of students, as the pivots of the pole quiver with the vibrations of the glittering constellations. And yet Britain, placed, if you like to say so, at almost the extreme margin of the western clime of the orb, possesses as it were the flame-bearing sun and the lucid moon; that is to say, Theodore the archbishop, grown old from the earliest childhood of rudiments in the flower of philosophic art, and Adrian, his companion in the brotherhood of learning, ineffably endowed with pure urbanity."

Aldhelm then proceeds to give an account of Theodore's lectures, which shows that Irish students came over in numbers to hear him, and behaved themselves in a non-docile manner. He was "densely surrounded by a crowd of Irish disciples, who grievously badgered him as the truculent boar is hemmed in by a

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snarling pack of Molossian hounds. He tore them with the tusk of grammar, and pierced them with the deep and sharp syllogisms of chronography, till they cast away their weapons and hurriedly fled to the recesses of their dens." Such was the fate of those who badgered the Archbishop of Canterbury in Aldhelm's time. History is said to repeat itself[1].

Aldhelm's own monastery was to see in its lecture rooms, two hundred years later, a scene of at least equal violence, when the parts and the result were reversed. John the Scot came to Malmesbury to lecture to the students there in King Alfred's time, when learning was being revived. How it was that he aggravated the students we do not know; but he did aggravate them, and to such a pitch that they did him to death with the iron styles which they used for making notes on their wax tablets, as we use pen or pencil on paper. He was a very small man, as we shall see shortly from one of the stories which William tells us of him; so the students had him at a disadvantage. The lectures appear to have been given in the Church of St. Laurence, at least the murder took place in that church. He was eventually buried in the great church, on the left of the

[1] This was written during the primacy of Dr. Temple.

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altar, with an inscription which mentioned but did not describe his martyrdom.

William assumes the identity of this John with the famous John the Scot, Johannes Erigena, John the Erin-born. This identity has now been disputed; though until comparatively recent times the identity of the two Johns has been accepted. One of the principal grounds for traversing the belief in their identity is that of date. But it is possible that Johannes Erigena lived long enough to have been at Malmesbury in Alfred's time as a very old man; and he was certainly well known at the court of Charles le Chauve, the father of Judith, Alfred's young step-mother. He was also a man of rather upsetting views on some theological questions, and we can well imagine a class of students, very strong in their theological views, and not quite under control, becoming seriously irritated by the exposition of views to which they were hostile, especially if, as was probable in John's case, the logic was too much for them. The conduct of university students in more than one of the less civilized parts of the Europe of to-day may serve to show us that there was danger in such an encounter of mutually hostile theological opinions; and I am not quite sure that

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we need go so far as Russia for an example, or confine our survey to university lecturers and university students.

William tells us two stories of the real John the Scot, which, apart from any question of the identity of the two Johns, certainly belong to John Erigena. He was sitting at table opposite the Frank king, Charles le Chauve, at dinner. The king noticed something in John's conduct which offended his Gallican idea of good manners. As a gentle rebuke, with a play upon John's origin, William says, a remark which suggests a good deal of frank pungency of speech in William's own experience, the king asked him, "What is there between a Scot and a sot?" John replied, "Only the table, Sire." The king had such great regard for the Master, as he was wont to call him, that he did not resent the saying. On another occasion John was sitting at the royal table between two clerics of gigantic size, himself being an exceedingly small man. The king sent him a dish with three fishes on it, two being large fishes and the third very small, and bade him divide them among the three of them. John, who always did what he could in a proper way to promote hilarity among his fellow guests, took the two large fishes him-

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self, and gave the one little fish to his two big neighbours. The injustice of this partition was pointed out by the king. "Nay," John replied, "it is quite fair. For here," pointing to the fishes on his plate, "are two big ones, and here," pointing to himself, "is one little one; while there," pointing to his neighbour clerics, "are two big ones, and there," pointing to the halves of the little fish, "is one little one." I feel clear, after a good deal of pleasant experience of the race, that undergraduates never did to death a man with such a gift of ready humour. There is, however, no doubt that there was at Malmesbury in William's time the epitaph of a "holy sophist John," who "passed to the kingdom of Christ by martyrdom":—

> Closed in this tomb the holy Sophist John,
> Endowed in life with dogma marvellous.
> By martyrdom he reached the realm of Christ,
> Where all the Saints through all the ages reign.

John the Erin-born, it may be added, was esteemed a martyr, and was placed in the Roman Calendar [1].

Asser, who almost certainly knew the facts from personal knowledge, tells us that Alfred brought over John of Corbey, a very different

[1] E. H. Browne, *The Thirty-nine Articles*, Art. xxviii.

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person, and settled him as Abbat at Athelney. He describes a murderous attack upon this Abbat John, made by his monks. It seems improbable that two murderous attacks should be made upon two Johns under Alfred's special patronage, or that Asser, while describing one, should keep silence about the other, especially if the John concerned in the second case was a man famous in the theological world of Europe at the time. It may be added that if John was still alive at the time, which is not impossible, he must have been very old—as men then counted age—for such a venture as a migration to Wessex to undertake the work of delivering lectures to young students.

A kindly reviewer, noticing some remarks of mine on this subject in an article dealing with Alfred as a religious man and educationist, observed that I appeared to accept the identity of the two Johns, and that this ought to have been impossible after the modern edition of William of Malmesbury. I need scarcely say that I was familiar with that edition, having used no other. As myself an old reviewer, I ventured to suppose that my critic had not turned over the page on which he was commenting; for while it ended with the words "We may fairly say that William

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believed their John to be the Erigena," at the top of the next page were the words "and we may almost certainly say that in that belief he was wrong."

Very little is known of the actual life of Johannes Scotus Erigena. He was at the court of Charles the Bald about the year 852; Ethelwulf and his young son Alfred were there in 854. The ordinary books of dates give his death as "at Malmesbury in 886." If, as is supposed, he was in 852 a fully developed theologian, whose views on predestination and his treatise against the then newly invented dogma of transubstantiation were moving to its depths the theological world of Europe, he must have been quite an old man in 886. A dictionary of general biography, published under good auspices in 1867, remarks that before sending John to Malmesbury, Alfred had "placed him at the head of his newly founded college at Oxford," and kept him there for three years!

Aldhelm's connection with Irish students and Irish interests was no doubt emphasized, as it is evidenced, by his accurate knowledge of the life and experiences of Aldfrith, king of Northumbria, who more than any other Englishman, not excepting even the Northumbrian

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Ecgbert [1], formed a link between the students of England and of Ireland. It was to this king, under the name Acircius, that Aldhelm addressed his very lengthy treatise on metres, of which mention is made in Chapter XI.

Aldhelm's relations with Aldfrith had been very close. Aldhelm calls him "my most reverend son," "most excellent and best-loved son;" "mindful," he says, "of our former brotherhood, the more closely tied because bound by the sacred and septiform number of the mysteries." He reminds the king that, more than twenty years before, they had bound themselves together by pledges which could not be broken, and were united by ties which could not be loosed, at the time of Aldfrith's confirmation by the bishop, when he received the septiform abundance of spiritual charismata under the hand of the venerable pontiff. Aldhelm had then adopted the name of father, and Aldfrith a name which Aldhelm explains in a very long paragraph of very long words, the meaning of which appears to be that the name indicated the bursting forth of fruitful vine-buds on a bush, with prophetic shadowings forth which it takes fifteen close octavo lines to describe. This is, no doubt, the word Acir-

[1] See page 277.

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cius, by which, and not by his name Aldfrith, Aldhelm addresses the king. Unfortunately Aldhelm does not say who the bishop was[1], but he notes that it was "at the time of our puberty." We are able to ascertain what he meant by that, for in another place he remarks on Origen's great learning, "when he was entering upon the third lustrum of his age, at the commencement of puberty." This would put the confirmation about the years 650–655; but if that is so, Aldhelm's "twenty years ago" is wrong by at least ten years, for Aldfrith was king when the letter was written, and he became king in 685. We need not be surprised to find this link between Aldhelm and Aldfrith, for Aldfrith is said to have married Cuthburga, sister of Ina, king of Wessex; she left him to become a nun at Barking, to which sisterhood Aldhelm addressed his *Praise of Virgins*, and eventually became foundress and abbess of Wimborne. Thus Aldfrith had close relations with the court of Wessex, and he was related to Aldhelm by marriage.

It brings Ireland and England curiously

[1] If the confirmation was in Wessex, Agilbert is the only bishop who suits the date 650–655; if in the north, Aidan or Finan. There was no bishop in Mercia so early as that. Honorius was Archbishop.

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near, to learn that Aldfrith was first cousin, three times removed, of Columba. Oswy married, or did not marry, an Irish princess, Fina, daughter of Cennfaeladh, son of Ailill, Columba's first cousin; or, as another account has it, grand-daughter of king Baedan, Ailill's brother. In either case, Fina was great-grand-daughter of king Muircertach, Columba's uncle.

Bede gives as the reason for Aldfrith's going to Ireland, that he suffered voluntary exile by reason of his love for learning, that he might devote himself to the study of literature [1]. The Irish writers give two reasons, the first, that his mother was an Irishwoman, an excellent reason in itself; the second, that a slug or snail had got into his ear and caused a dangerous swelling, and he went not only to be perfected in learning, but also that by the prayers of the saints of Ireland he might be freed from the annoyance and from the disease it had brought on. The Irish Annals are persistent in claiming Aldfrith as an Irishman on his mother's side. Tighernach records in 704 the death of "Alfrith mac Ossu, Fland

[1] *Life of St. Cuthbert*, ch. xxiv. William of Malmesbury says of Aldfrith that in Ireland he was safe from the persecution of his brother; *Deeds of the Kings*, i. 3.

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Fina the Irish call him;" the Annals of Innisfallen, "Flann Fine, son of Ossa, king of the Saxons." A fragment of Irish Annals, printed by Mr. Skene in his *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots* (p. 402), gives under the year 704 "death of Flann Fiona, son of Ossa, king of Saxons, the famous wise man, pupil of Adamnan," and gives under the same year the death of Adamnan his teacher.

An old Irish poem ascribed to Aldfrith states that he went from school to school throughout Ireland, and gives very flattering accounts of what he saw. Armagh is mentioned among other places, and at that great school no doubt he studied. At Lismore, too, we may be sure that he spent some time, though the definite assertions that he did so which we find in books are not warranted by the record. The poem is highly elusive, as is the wont of early Irish poems and writings, and would seem purposely to avoid definiteness and everything which might be called historical. Among the more definite statements we read that in Armagh the writer found splendid meekness, prudence, and wisdom blended. In Munster he found kings and queens and poets; in Connaught, riches, hospitality, vigour, and fame; in Ulster, from glen to glen, hardy warriors, resolute men.

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The poem is written in twenty-four ranns, the twenty-third rann being literally as follows :—

It is natural in fair Innis-fail
  In Erin, without contention,
  Many women, no silly boast,
  Many laics, many clerics.
Flann Fina, son of Osa,
  Arch-doctor in Erin's learning,
  On the banks of the river Ren composed,
  Received his due, as was natural.

Bishop John Healy, in his very interesting *Insula sanctorum et doctorum*, prints two stanzas from a translation by Clarence Mangan, of which the Bishop remarks that it admirably preserves the spirit of the original :—

I found in Innisfail the fair,
In Ireland, while in exile there,
Women of worth, both grave and gay men,
Many clerics and many laymen.

I travelled its fruitful provinces round,
And in every one of the five I found,
Alike in Church and in palace hall,
Abundant apparel and food for all.

This is not an occasion for saying anything about Aldfrith beyond his connection with Ireland as a student ; otherwise, there is much to be said of him that is very creditable and very interesting.

During the middle age of Aldhelm, England and Ireland were frequently devastated by

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a terrible plague. The Irish and Welsh Annals have repeated notices of it, and Bede gives a striking account of its desolating effects. Bede had not any distinctive name for it, but in the Irish Annals it is called the yellow plague (*galar buidhe*), and so in the Cambrian Annals (*vad valen*). Giraldus, with his Cambrian knowledge, speaks of it as *flava pestis*, "the yellow plague, which physicians call the icterician disease." The diagnosis in the life of an early Irish saint is quaint,—"it first turns men yellow, and then kills them." The most severe of the visitations was in 664. Bede says of it that it went northwards from south Britain, seized upon the province of the Northumbrians, and there spread its cruel ravages far and wide, destroying a great multitude of men. He adds that it was equally fatal in Ireland. Adamnan speaks of two visitations which devastated the greater part of the world then known, Italy, Cisalpine Gaul, Spain, and Britain with only two exceptions—the Pictish half of the north of Scotland and the Scottish (Irish) half, in both of which the efficacy of St. Columba's influence with heaven protected the land. He regards the two worst attacks as those of 685 and 687, when Northumbria was specially afflicted; and adds that not Iona and

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its dependent islands only were protected from those attacks, but he himself and his companions from Iona, who were on each occasion visiting their friend King Aldfrith. They went about freely in the plague-stricken regions, and not one of them had even a passing ailment. The visitation of 687 and the previous year has a special interest for us of the English race, for we learn from Bede's history of the Abbats of Wearmouth[1] that Easterwine and nearly all the monks died of that plague, and it is probable that Bede himself was the one boy who was among the survivors. It was the visitation of 664 which opened up such great developments in the Church of England by carrying off in Kent on one day, July 14, both Archbishop Deusdedit and King Earconbert. The story goes that the Irish students took the plague to Ireland with them when they went home for the long vacation.

The most continuous link between English and Irish scholars in Aldhelm's time is introduced to us by this pestilence of 664, in the person of Ecgbert, a Northumbrian of noble family. Bede tells us that when the plague spread to Ireland and afflicted that country with its ravages, there were there many

[1] Chapter 8.

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English of the noble and the middle classes. They were accustomed to leave their native island, in the days of Finan and Colman, and reside in Ireland for the sake of study and to live a life of greater self-control. Some of them settled down in monasteries; others went about from one master's cell to another for special study. The Scots, that is the Irish, received them all in the most liberal manner, giving them their daily rations of food without charge, and providing for them gratuitously both books and instruction.

Ecgbert had recently gone over to Ireland as a student, with Ethelhun, the brother of another Anglo-Irish student, Ethelwin, who was afterwards (A. D. 680) bishop of the province of Lindsey. They were in the monastery of Rathmelsigi, which has been said to be Mellifont, near Drogheda, but unfortunately Mellifont was founded in the twelfth century. The Irish writers say that the monastery at which Ecgbert studied was in Connaught, and a reference has been found to a monastery in that kingdom called Rathmaoilsidhe, probably at the place called Rathmaoil, on the banks of the Moy. Bishop Healy believes that the crowds of Northumbrian students sailed to the estuary of the

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Moy and thence went south by land. It does not seem clear why they should go round the north of Ireland and land on its western part. It is true that Colman took that route when he left Northumbria after the conference at Whitby and founded "Mayo of the English," after failing to establish a monastery on the island called Inis Bofin, off the western coast; but he started from Iona on his journey.

The whole of the inmates of the monastery had died of the plague, except Ecgbert and Ethelhun, and those two were stricken with the fatal disease. The story was told to Bede by a priest, venerable and of great veracity, who heard it from the lips of Ecgbert himself. Ecgbert vowed that if he recovered he would never go back to Britain, he would recite the whole Psalter every day besides all the wonted services and psalms, and he would every week fast one whole day and night. Ethelhun died the next day. Ecgbert recovered, and lived, it is said by Bede, to be ninety, dying in 729. He added to his vow that during each Lent he would have only one meal a day, and that of bread and skim-milk limited in quantity. Large numbers of English youths put themselves under his instruction. It was from him that Willibrord and others caught the

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missionary ardour which consumed the master; visions and storms taught Ecgbert that he was not himself to go to the mission field. During Bede's mature age, Ecgbert lived for twelve years in Iona, dying there. Ceadda (St. Chad) was one of Ecgbert's early companions in Ireland.

Armagh was so famous as a school for English students, that one of the three divisions of the city was called Trian Saxon. The other great school of the north was Bangor. Clonmacnois was the school at which the famous Northumbrian Alcuin studied. We have a letter of his to his teacher there, Colgu or Colgan, written so late in his life that he sent with it a present of money from Charlemagne; he adds as much on his own account, and sends a quantity of oil, which it was very difficult to obtain in Ireland, to be distributed among the Bishops for sacramental purposes; a curious incidental evidence of the large number of persons at that time in episcopal orders in Ireland. The other great school of Connaught was Clonfert.

Next in importance to Clonmacnois, Lismore in Munster was a great place of study for Englishmen. Mention has already been made[1]

[1] Page 47.

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of this famous school. Clonard was the great school of Meath, and Glendalough of Leinster. Other schools equally or almost equally famous can be named.

It was not always for study that youths were sent to Ireland. Thus Dagobert, the son of Sigebert, king of the Austrasian Franks, was sent there by the Mayor of the Palace, Grimoald, on his father's death, in order that the Mayor might exercise sovereign power. He was tonsured, and brought up as a monk, it is said at Slane, where the kings dwelt. In Aldhelm's time, about 674, the Frankish prince was restored to his kingdom on the death of Childeric II.

We have seen that a converse stream of Irish students crossed the seas to study under Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury, and before that time there had been a great inflow of the Scotic people into Northumbria. Agilbert passed from his studies in Ireland to act as bishop in Wessex, and curiously enough was the means of overthrowing the Scotic practices in Northumbria by appointing Wilfrith as his spokesman at Whitby. This points to his having been a student in the south of Ireland. Even so late as Dunstan's time, Glastonbury was served by Irish clergy,

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the monk Osbern says, and it was from them that he learned all he knew, including the art of working in metal. Osbern says that with other races, love of travel has grown into a custom; with the Irish, the custom of peregrination has grown into nature.

We have an interesting evidence of the restlessness of the Irish of those early times, in the cause which frustrated the attempt of Colman to establish his monastery on Inis Bofin, referred to above[1]. Bede tells us that Colman settled on the Isle of the White Heifer and placed there the monk which he had brought of both nations, English and Irish. But the monks did not agree among themselves. In the summer season, when the fruits of the earth had to be gathered, the Irish monks left their monastery and wandered about to places which they knew. When winter came on they returned to the monastery and expected to be fed on the supplies which the English monks had stored. The only remedy Colman could discover was to carry off his English monks to a place which he bought on the mainland, now Mayo, from the chief to whom it belonged. There he built for them a monastery, with the help of the

[1] Page 278.

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chief and all the neighbours. The Irish monks he left to their own devices on the island of the White Heifer. Those of us who are septuagenarians can well remember the crowds of Irish labourers who used in the days of our boyhood to come over with sickles and reap the cornfields of the English farmers.

In Columba's time a converse visit to Britain was not regarded as a very pleasurable diversion. The Saint learned in a vision that with one Lugaid a man was coming to the Iouan island (miscalled for now many centuries Iona) who had committed the vilest of sins. Some months after, the Saint spoke to Diormit, "Rise quickly, Lugaid is coming; go bid him put that wretch out on the Malean island (Mull), that he tread not the soil of this island." Diormit returned, and reported the agonized words of the unhappy man. Columba went down to the port and inflicted on him the severest penalty, "Go, and for twelve years do penance with weeping and tears among the Britons." The Saint told his companions privately that the man was a son of perdition, and would not stay his twelve years; he would soon return to Scotia (Ireland) and would perish. And so it came to pass.

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The Irish had indeed reason to mislike the idea of residing among the Britons if they were acquainted with the story of St. Indract. He with seven companions came to Glastonbury on their return from Rome to Ireland in the time of the Britons. Their long walking-sticks, with a crook at the top, the origin of the pastoral staff, were shod with brass to protect them from wearing away with constant use. The people near Glastonbury thought the sticks were shod with gold, and they killed the unfortunate owners to secure this booty.

It is interesting and not uninstructive to examine the Irish Annals of the Four Masters for references to Britain and its inhabitants. They all fall in the Anglo-Saxon times [1]; and it is worthy of note, in connection with our study of Anglo-Irish relations in Aldhelm's time, that of all the direct references which we find, only fifteen in number, more than half fall in the years 675 to 714.

With the exception given in the note below, if it can be called an exception, the earliest

[1] The name of Britain is mentioned under the year 432, when Saint Patrick's pedigree is traced through fifteen generations to its head in "Britain, otter of the sea, from whom the vigorous Britons come."

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event mentioned by the Four Masters is found under the year 620. It is not of a peaceful character—"Mongan, son of Fiachna Lurgan (a king of Uladh), was killed with a stone by Arthur son of Bicor one of the Britons." This killing of Mongan with a stone evidently made an impression, for we have it also in the Annals of Clonmacnois, where we find a delightful sketch of the Irishman of all ages, and at the same time a hint of the Briton's provocation—"Mongan, a very well-spoken man, and much given to the wooing of women, was killed by (Arthur son of) Bicor a Welshman, with a stone."

In 622 St. Feargna Brit, Feargna cognomento Britannicus, Abat of Ia [1] and a Bishop, died.

In 675 Beccan Ruiminni died in Britain on the 17th of March. The Annals of Clonmacnois call him Beagan Rumyn, and make him die in the island of Wales, the Clonmacnois name for Britain.

In 680 there was a battle at Rathmore, in Antrim, with the Britons. In 695 there was the devastation of Magh Muirtheimhne by the Britons and Ulidians. In 700 Irgalach Ua

[1] That is, of course, the island which we call Iona, by a misreading of its Latin name *Ioua Insula*.

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Conaing was killed by the Britons. In 707 Britons who had joined the army of Ceallach were slain at the battle of Selgge in Wicklow. In 712 Fogartach Ua Cearnaigh was banished into Britain by Fearghal king of Ireland; and in 714 he returned from his exile.

There is no mistaking the nature of the political relations of the two islands and peoples, whatever we may think of the intercommunion of the students.

The early and close connection between the Northumbrian English and the Irish of Iona, has made an abiding mark upon the Coronation services of the English from the earliest times to the present. Inasmuch as the debt which early Christian England owed to Ireland is very imperfectly appreciated, it seems worth while to call attention to the Irish origin of parts of the English Coronation services, even at some length.

On the occasion of a great famine in Ireland, a scourge to which that island appears to be peculiarly liable, about the year 500 A.D., the inhabitants of one part of the land, who were called Dal Riada, divided themselves into two bodies. The one remained in Ireland, the other took possession of Argyll and the western parts of Scotland. The Dalriada of Scotland con-

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tinued to be, in some degree, subordinate to the parent stock till the year 575, when Aedhan, at that time lord or king of the Scottish Dalriads, raised the question of the relations of himself and his kinsman Aedh, the Irish king. It was referred for settlement to St. Columba of Iona, who was of the royal blood on both sides, and was related to both kings. The decision came to this, that Aedhan was released from tribute to Aedh, and became an independent sovereign. He and those of his blood reigned over the West of Scotland down to the time of their descendant Kenneth MacAlpine, in whose person the kings of the western Scots became kings also of the Picts in the eastern parts of Scotland. Kenneth's descendants reigned as kings of all Scotland. They are still reigning in that capacity in the person of King Edward VII.

This preface will serve to show the far-reaching influence of the episode we are about to consider. We find it set forth by Adamnan, a successor of St. Columba, in the sixth chapter of the third book of his life of the saint, written about the year 695. He quotes an account written by a previous abbat fifty years before, and we cannot doubt that his information came in an unbroken line from Columba himself.

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When a saint of those early times and of that imaginative race proposed to do something very unusual, he easily worked himself up to the belief that he had supernatural compulsion in taking the proposed course, and his statements to that effect bore down opposition. We must read this idea into the story.

Columba was staying in the island of Hinba in the year 574, twenty-three years before Augustine landed in the isle of Thanet. The lordship of the Scottish Dalriads, soon to become a kingship in the full sense, was vacant. In his retirement in Hinba, Columba no doubt reviewed the political situation, and resolved upon a course of action. The relations between his Scottish and his Irish relatives had been strained. There were the elements of permanent discord. Some step must at this juncture be taken other than the obvious step. Whether the new departure had reference to the person who should succeed, or to the sanctions by which he should be placed at the head of the people, we cannot say. One night the saint saw in a mental ecstasy an angel of the Lord. The angel held in his hand a crystal codex, a book of the ordination of kings. This book the saint received from the hand of the angel, and in obedience to the

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angel's command he began to read it. When he found that the book instructed him to ordain Aedhan to be king, he refused, for he loved Aedhan's brother Iogenan better than Aedhan. It would appear that he regarded himself as the proper person to select from the nearest candidates the one whom he should recommend to the people. The angel replied: "Know of a surety that I am sent to thee by God with this crystal book, that according to the words which you have read in it you ordain Aedhan to the kingdom." For three consecutive nights the angel appeared, bearing the same book, delivering the same command. The saint at length determined to obey, having found his nocturnal visitor unpleasantly vindictive. He crossed the water to Iona, found that by a noteworthy coincidence Aedhan had arrived there before him, and ordained him to be king. In the following year he was declared to be an independent sovereign, free from tribute to his Irish cousins. How far this declaration turned upon the religious ceremony of ordination to a kingship we do not know.

Adamnan appears to have understood that the crystal book contained a set form for the ordination of kings, and that only in the

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course of reading the form did Columba come upon the name of Aedhan. On the whole, it would seem that such a form was a new thing, and that Columba was the originator of a set form for the ordination of kings. If the story only means that he used for a tributary king the form in use for an independent sovereign, we do not know how much further back the origin of our English service is to be found.

In the course of the form of ordination, Adamnan tells us, Columba gave an address. He prophesied, spoke in prophetic spirit to the king of the future, of his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons; then, laying his hand on his head, he ordained him and blessed him. Cumine the White, Adamnan proceeds, in the book which he wrote some forty or fifty years before of the virtue of Columba, says that this was the manner in which the saint began to prophesy of Aedhan and his posterity and his kingdom: "Believe without doubt, O Aedhan, that none of thine adversaries shall be able to resist thee, so long as thou hast not dealt unfairly with me or my successors. Whereupon do thou commend it to thy sons that they commend it to their sons and grandsons and posterity, that they lose not from their hands by their evil counsels the sceptre

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of this kingdom." It is difficult to imagine that Aedhan was not at the moment of this utterance seated before Columba with an actual sceptre in his hand. Tradition says that he sat upon the Stone of Fate, carried afterwards to Dunstaffnage, and thence to Scone, and so to Westminster. The stone at Westminster is understood by geologists to be a piece of Scone sandstone.

Thus we have in the year 574 (1) a set form for ordaining kings, (2) a sermon, apparently added by Columba, (3) the imposition of hands, (4) an address of exhortation, that the sceptre may not pass out of the hands of the king and his descendants, and presumably, (5) the king seated, almost certainly on some special stone, holding in his hand a sceptre, (6) the solemn blessing of the king when ordained.

We may dismiss (3) with the remark that the imposition of hands certainly passed from Columba's ceremonial into that of the Anglo-Saxon Church. The evidence for this is found in our late Anglo-Saxon Coronation Order, probably not a century before the Norman Conquest. In that Order there is a quaint survival of the imposition of hands in the form for crowning the queen, the king's consort. She is described in prayer as "this thy

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servant, who, by the imposition of our hands, is this day constituted queen." We shall see later that this is not the only case in which words appropriate only to a king are copied into the service for the queen. Of the imposition of hands as a ceremony in use in the case of the king, we have no direct evidence in Anglo-Saxon or in later times.

The point of chief interest to us, for our present purpose, of the six above named, is number 4, the exhortation that the sceptre may not depart from the hands of the king and his descendants. Though we have not that form now, and though it does not appear in either of our Anglo-Saxon forms, there is abundant evidence, of a singularly interesting character, that it did pass from Columba's ceremonial into that of the Anglo-Saxons. We have in France several manuscript forms for the coronation of the French kings, which are, in fact, Anglo-Saxon forms for the consecration of Anglo-Saxon sovereigns, evidently borrowed from Anglo-Saxon England for use in France. Of this borrowing of English forms for use in France we have positive evidence in Alcuin's time. These various French forms describe the land over which the king is to reign as that of England.

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Thus we have in reality several Anglo-Saxon Coronation Orders, and not two only. In all the various Anglo-Saxon Orders which we find in France, the prayer that the sceptre may not depart is found. That is abundant evidence that our Anglo-Saxon ancestors took part of their form from Columba. We shall see later that they took another part also from him, and that we have it still.

It is very quaint to read in these Coronation Orders of the French kings the prayers in which we find our evidence that they are Anglo-Saxon forms. Thus in a MS. of an abbat of Corbey we read in the "Coronation of French Kings"; "This thy servant whom with suppliant devotion we elect equally to the kingdom of the whole of Albion, that is to say, of the Franks. . . . That he may nourish and teach the Church of the whole of Albion, with the peoples committed to his charge. . . . That the sceptre desert not the royal throne, that is to say, of the Franks. . . . That supported by the due subjection of both of these peoples." No doubt the Anglo-Saxon form contained the names of two peoples, such as the Angles and Saxons, or Saxons and Mercians. This is the explanation of "we elect equally" and "both of these peoples."

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In the final blessing, which is in exactly the words of the later of our own two Anglo-Saxon Coronation Orders, we have a clear piece of additional evidence of the English origin of the form, the only saint mentioned, besides the Virgin and St. Peter, being "Holy Gregory, Apostolic of the Angles." In the preparation of the Sens Order, to be mentioned later, this flaw had been discovered, and St. Denys and St. Remy are put in the place of St. Gregory. The mention of the Virgin and St. Peter is in itself an evidence of a rather late date. St. Peter and St. Paul were in our earlier times regarded as the joint chiefs of the Apostles and the joint protectors of England.

In a manuscript in the Royal Library, now the National Library, at Paris we have a second Order for the Coronation of a King of the Franks, which is indubitably an Anglo-Saxon Order. The following phrases occur: "This thy servant whom with suppliant devotion we elect king equally. . . . That the sceptre desert not the royal throne, that is to say, of the Saxons, Mercians, and Northumbrians (Nordanchimbrorum). . . . That supported by the due subjection of both of these peoples." Here again the "elect king equally"

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and "both of these peoples" seem to show that two peoples were originally named, and before the Order reached France the Northumbrians had been added. If this argument is sound, we may date this Anglo-Saxon form after Athelstan's time, and assign it to the coronation of King Edmund. This Coronation Order is remarkable as having in the form for the coronation of a queen consort the prayer that a blessing may descend "upon this thy servant whom with suppliant devotion we elect queen," the words being blindly copied from the coronation of the king, who presumably was the person responsible for the choice of the queen.

In a third Order for the Coronation of French Kings, from the Pontifical of the illustrious Church of Sens, we have a careful order of precedence of the bishops of the Archbishopric of Reims, the peer-bishops first according to their rank, Laon, Beauvais, Langres, Châlons, Noyon, and then follows the Anglo-Saxon form of prayer: "That the sceptre desert not the royal throne, that is to say, of the Saxons, Mercians, and Northumbrians (Nordan Cymbrorum)," and "that the king, supported by the due subjection of both of these peoples." The queen also is prayed

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for as one "who by the imposition of our hand is this day constituted queen." Indeed, the whole is practically our later Anglo-Saxon form, with two exceptions. Our later form has gone back to the mention of two peoples only, the Angles and Saxons, probably because the Mercians and the Northumbrians and the East Angles were classed together as Angles and the rest of the folk as Saxons. The other exception is that while the royal throne of the Angles and Saxons is mentioned, the prayer that the sceptre may not desert the throne is omitted, probably as having ceased to have any special meaning. It was, in the first instance, in Columba's time, a part of the threat of disaster to follow disobedience without which few, if any, of the Irish saints felt that they had done their duty.

The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert, now at Rouen, has the form "Angles and Saxons." So late as 1364, Charles V of France was crowned with a form which named the throne as that of the Saxons, Mercians, and Northchimbrians, while the peers of Guienne swore to protect him against the king of England, his people, and allies.

Having thus shown the connection between Columba's form for the ordination of King

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Aedhan and the Anglo-Saxon forms, in a detail which has dropped out, we can turn to a connection which still continues, and continues, indeed, in double force.

Adamnan tells us in the first chapter of his *Life of St. Columba*, that his predecessor Failbe told him an interesting fact, which he had heard from the mouth of King Oswald himself, when the king was relating the circumstances to Seghine the abbat of his time. The day before his great fight with the Britons, who had overrun Northumbria after the defeat and death of Edwin, Oswald was lying in his tent, wearied with the work of marking out his camp. He slept. Columba appeared to him in a vision. He announced himself to Oswald by name, and addressed him as the Lord addressed Joshua the son of Nun before he crossed Jordan, "Be strong and play the man; I am with thee, as I was with Moses."—Josh. i. 6, 9. He added: "On this following night go forth from camp to fight, for this time the Lord hath granted to me that thy foes be put to flight, and thine enemy Catlon be delivered into thy hands, and that thou shalt return from the war a victor, and reign happily." The king went out and told his council the vision. Strengthened thereby,

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the whole of the people vowed that on their return they would believe and be baptised, "for up to that time the whole of that province of Saxony was in the darkness of Gentile ignorance, with the exception of Oswald himself and twelve companions, who had been baptised with him during his exile among the Scots." At night the king sallied forth, and the Lord gave to him a complete and easy victory. Catlon was slain, and Oswald "was afterwards ordained by God over-king of the whole of Britain. This account our Abbat Failbe, my immediate predecessor, gave to me, Adamnan; he positively asserted that he himself heard Oswald tell the vision to Abbat Seghine." It may be remarked, in connection with the much misunderstood word Protestant in our Coronation Service, that Abbat Failbe was the first Protestant in these islands, for Adamnan says that he "protested," that is, made a positive assertion, that he heard Oswald relate the above vision. Archbishop Ecgbert, the compiler of our earliest Anglo-Saxon form in 737, uses "protest" for the positive testimony on oath of a bishop. A Protestant is one who asserts his own belief in a definite and positive form.

The words quoted by Columba in this vision

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in the year 634, thirty-seven years after his death, come from the Vulgate version of the first chapter of Joshua, "be strong and robust," "be strong and play the man." This anthem is not found in our own Anglo-Saxon forms; but here again the forms for the French kings come to our aid. In the Pontifical of Sens, where we have the prayer for the Saxons, Mercians, and Northumbrians, when the sword is given, we find the entry, "Here let the antiphon be sung, 'Be strong and play the man.'" Two of the other French Anglo-Saxon Orders do not give any antiphons. All through the Norman and later mediaeval times this anthem, known as the *Confortare*, was sung at the coronation of English kings. We have put St. Columba's words into the most prominent place of all, as the climax of the actual crowning. At the coronation of Charles I we find the rubic, "The Archbishop reads the *Confortare*, but formerly the Quire sung it," and the words then read by the Archbishop were a literal translation of the Anglo-Saxon form in the Sens Pontifical. For the coronation of William and Mary the words "Be strong and play the man" were felt to be not quite suitable, and "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers," was

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rather cleverly introduced in their stead. At the coronation of King Edward VII, not only did the Archbishop read the old words "Be strong and of a good courage" as the climax of the actual crowning, but the choir replied with the anthem "Be strong and play the man."

Thus we have these two clear evidences of the connection of our English Coronation Orders with the primary ordination of a king by Columba and with the words of Columba in the vision to Oswald. When we come to think of it, it would be remarkable if there were not such evidence, for Oswald's "ordination" as king can only have been in accordance with Columba's form, inasmuch as his sole bishop came from Iona, and must there have been intimate with colleagues who were living at the time of Aedhan's ordination as king. One of the things he would certainly take with him to England was a form by which to "ordain" Oswald. The great probability is that Oswald heard the *Confortare* in his vision because he had heard in Iona itself what Columba's form was, and because that form included the *Confortare*. Indeed, he may himself have been present in Iona when a king was ordained there by the Columban rite; as may also Aidan, who came from Iona to be

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his bishop, and made a much larger mark upon the conversion of England than Augustine and his companions did. The trend of the evidence appears to be that we derive our Coronation Service through the Northumbrians of Oswald's time from the "form for the ordination of kings" contained in Columba's crystal codex of the year 574, and that King Edward VII was crowned by a form used for his grandfather with more than forty "greats" before it.

It has seemed important to emphasise our direct connection with Ireland, in confirmation of the evidence which Aldhelm's life and works afford.

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CHAPTER XI

Aldhelm's Letter to Acircius.—His Enigmas.—His Treatise in Praise of Virginity.—Letter to Osgith.

THE *Letter to Acircius* is one of the largest of Aldhelm's works. Its full title is *A Book on the Number Seven, on Metres, on Enigmas, and on the Rules of Poetic Feet.* Acircius was, as we have seen[1], King Aldfrith of Northumbria. This treatise and the *Praise of Virginity*, or *of Virgins*, show really wide reading of Latin authors, perhaps only in special extracts; there can be no sort of doubt as to the great extent of Aldhelm's learning.

A careful study of the sources of Aldhelm's knowledge has been made by a Viennese philologer, Manitius. His pamphlet of a hundred pages large 8vo, *zu* Aldhelm *und* Baeda, was published in Vienna in 1886.

Aldhelm's treatise on metres and grammar was naturally indebted very largely to Priscian. It is from Aldhelm that we learn the tradition that the emperor Theodosius the younger, who died A. D. 450, copied out Priscian's gram-

[1] Page 270.

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matical work with his own hand; this tradition assigns an earlier date to the grammarian than does the other tradition, that he was a contemporary of Cassiodorus, who began his very long life in 468. Aldhelm also used the work of Phocas, or Foca, an earlier grammarian quoted by Priscian and Cassiodorus; and the much earlier grammatical work of Suetonius, who was a young man in the reign of the emperor Domitian. He appears to have been largely indebted to the grammarian Audax: and he quotes from Donatus, the preceptor of Jerome; Sergius, who commented on Donatus; Pompeius, whom Cassiodorus quotes; and others.

Aldhelm's quotations from poets are exceedingly numerous; but that is a characteristic of Priscian's works also, and we cannot doubt that very many of Aldhelm's quotations were copied from Priscian. Manitius fills twelve octavo pages with Aldhelm's quotations from Virgil. Twenty-six quotations come from Ovid, and one which Aldhelm says is from Ovid but is in fact from a later poem wrongly assigned to him. Inasmuch as the verse quoted speaks of "giving soft kisses to one sweetly quiescent," Aldhelm did not make any very obvious mistake in naming Ovid as the author. Only four quotations from

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Horace have been found, and one of these scarcely counts. Aldhelm quotes, in several cases naming the author, from Terence, Seneca, Persius, Juvenal, Lucan (often), Juvencus (two pages and a half of quotations), Paulinus, Ausonius, Prudentius, Claudian, Prosper, Sidonius Apollinaris, Sedulius (four pages of quotations), Arator (a page), Corippus (a page), Venantius Fortunatus (a page). Bede does not quote from nearly so many poets.

So far as his quotations from the Scriptures are concerned, Aldhelm certainly had both the Vulgate and the Itala, for in one case he quotes the one and then adds "or as the other text has it" and gives the other quotation; and in some cases he quotes the one and in other cases the other. But in a large number of cases his quotations are, as it were, between the two. Manitius is of opinion that it is scarcely believable that Aldhelm mixed his quotations; he must, Manitius thinks, have had the manuscript of a text which stood between the two, and agreed sometimes with one, sometimes with the other. A student who is not wedded to the belief that all early writers actually copied from their manuscripts of the Scriptures every word of the passages they quoted, is prepared to think, in the absence

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of any known manuscript containing their version of a text, that they quoted a good deal from memory, and to find in that thought the solution of a good many difficulties. We may take as an example two words to which Manitius calls our attention, in the third verse of the first chapter of Jeremiah; the Itala has *priusquam exires*, the Vulgate *antequam exires*, Aldhelm *antequam procederes*. It seems difficult to found on this an argument as to the version used, although the passage is one of great importance, in Aldhelm's opinion, in favour of the Virgin-birth of the Messiah. Of his supposed evidences for a middle text Manitius names about a hundred and twenty passages in Aldhelm's writings.

In the *Letter to Acircius*, after sixteen octavo pages of very heavy words, fifteen pages follow of question and answer on the intricacies of poetic metres, where *D.* (the disciple) asks the questions, and *M.* (the master) gives the information sought. As an example we may take the following:—

D. "What is an acephalon?"

M. "A verse without a head, where the first syllable is short, contrary to the nature of the verse."

D. "Give me an authoritative example."

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M. "In the second verse of the Aeneid Virgil has placed an acephalon,

Italiam fato profugus,

admitting by a barbarism a tribrach for a dactyl."

The modern books give the first syllable of *Italia* as long, while deriving it from *vĭtulus*, and from the Greek *ĭtalos*. The fact is that both in Greek and in Virgil the *i* was made long in dactylic verse. Aldhelm might have read further on in the First Book of the Aeneid, and found a verse beginning (l. 263),

Bellum ingens geret Italia,—

a "barbarism" which he would call a lagaron; and in line 657 of the Eleventh Book he would find another acephalon, a line beginning with *Italides*.

Aldhelm is not over particular as to the sources from which he draws his proofs. Thus:

D. "What is an heroic catalectic verse?"

M. "Virgil gives an example ..... And in the Book of Judges,

Septuaginta prius truncarat corpora regum."

Or again, after an explanation that a *versus districtus* has no word which by itself forms

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a complete foot, and that a *versus divisus* is one which has a separate word for each foot:

D. "What is a mixed verse?"

M. "That which in one part is *districtus*, and in the other part *divisus*."

D. "I follow the answer more easily if you prove it by an example."

M. "Virgil in the Fourth Book . . . . . And elsewhere a poet says:

Petrus Apostolicae qui culmina praesidet arcis.

It is scanned thus: Petrus Ap . ostoli . cae qui (there you have the *districtus* part) . culmina . praesidet . arcis (there the *divisus* part)." The poet in this case is Aldhelm himself. The verse occurs in his *Praise of Virgins*, line 529 (Giles, p. 150). It is in a very interesting part of that poem, where he has named Paul the Apostle as a virgin, and clearly could not name Peter in the same category. He is, however, determined to bring Peter in, so he names Clement of Rome as a virgin, and attributes his baptism to Peter whom he describes in the line quoted.

One page of the Sandford and Merton sort of colloquy, at a later part of the book, is interesting. *Magister* has explained that sounds are either articulate or confused; the sounds made by man are alone articulate, that is, can

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be written down; all other sounds made by things living or inanimate are confused. *Discipulus* says: "Give me some examples of confused voice, taken from various natures of things." *Magister* replies, in a manner which reminds us of Dame Juliana Berners' care to record the proper words to use for describing herds of animals or groups of birds, as a bevy of quail, a gaggle of women: "Bees *bombizant*, hawks *pipant* or *pipilant*, rams *blaterant*, asses *oncant*, crows *croccant*, horses *hinniunt*, hens *cacillant* (hard *c*), sparrows *titiant*, partridges *cacabant*, pigs *grundiunt*, cranes *gruddant* or *gruunt* or *grugulant*, frogs *coaxant*"; and in the middle of all, his Irish training inducing him to make a joke which is not in point, like the cats and the rats which spoil some of the marvellous Irish illustrations of the Book of Kells, "Jupiter *tonat* as fables feign." The laborious Germans have had much to say as to the sources of all this.

The last question of the part specially devoted to metres is:

D. "Now that you have made the intricacies of the art of metre clearer than the light, is it not time that you should give me in verse the problems of enigmas which you have promised?"

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M. "I should have done so some time ago, but your close questions have fully occupied the time."

Then comes a Prologue of thirty-six hexameters, the initial letters of which, when read downwards, and the final letters also read downwards, spell the hexameter:

> Aldhelmus cecinit millenis versibus odas
> Aldhelm has sung odes in a thousand verses;

and sure enough he proceeds to pour forth riddles in hexameter lines which nearly reach a thousand in number. Of the prologue we have already spoken on page 69.

Mr. Thomas Wright, in the Introduction to his literary biographies of the Anglo-Saxon period, remarks that among the Anglo-Saxons no class of popular literature was so general a favourite as enigmas and riddles. Collections such as the Enigmas of Aldhelm were formed at an early period in this country, and large numbers were written in the vernacular; there are in the well-known Exeter book many riddles in Anglo-Saxon verse. They were imitations of a Latin tract, popular among the Anglo-Saxons, the title of which was *Symposii Aenigmata.* Aldhelm confesses himself to be but an imitator of Symposius, thereby incidentally deciding the controversy,

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so far as his own belief went, between those who have maintained that Symposius was the author or collector of the Enigmas, and those who have held that the Enigmas were for the amusement of a symposium, or drinking-party.

The confusion between a proper name and a common noun or an adjective, as in this dispute between Symposium as the name of a drinking-party and part of the name of a book, and Symposius as the supposed author, has not been very uncommon. There are one or two interesting examples of it in King Alfred's version of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, the work of Boethius. Thus, in chapter xvi. he makes Boethius speak of the marvellous constancy of the Roman prince Liberius; whereas Boethius really wrote of the constancy of a certain freeman, *liberum quendam*. And again, in chapter xviii. King Alfred tells that what he relates may be read in the book that is called *Astrologium*; whereas Boethius refers the reader to astrological demonstrations.

The Latin riddles of the *Symposium*, or of *Symposius*, were a hundred in number, and of three lines each, making three hundred lines in all. Cynewulf wrote, or was credited with, ninety-six Anglo-Saxon riddles. Ald-

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helm wrote—unfortunately in Latin—a Prologue and ninety-nine enigmas, thus forming, as he would have said, a "century," a phrase familiar to us now in connection with another field of activity. He spent his energies upon seven hundred and sixty-four hexameter lines in this composition. We should thankfully sacrifice them all for the odd sixty-four lines in his own native Saxon, not a word of which we possess. The racy keenness and bluntness of the West-Saxon jests would have been a profitable exchange for his roundabout Latin hexameters. Nineteen of his enigmas are of four lines each, fifteen of five lines, and so on in regular order up to four of eleven each. Then come one of thirteen lines, one of fifteen, one of sixteen, and one of eighty-five. Clearly Aldhelm was determined to outdo his prototype, whose riddles had only three lines each. Aldhelm gave to each division of his series a Greek designation, according to the number of lines, *tetrastichon*, *pentastichon*, up to *heccaidecastichon* and *polystichon*.

Boniface, a generation and a half later, wrote nine enigmas in Latin hexameters, and sent them with a preface in like metre to his sister. They were, he tells her, "ten golden

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apples which grew from fair flowers on the tree of life." The subjects are Catholic Faith, Hope, Justice, Truth, Pity, Patience, Christian Peace, Christian Humility, Virginity. They compare very favourably with Aldhelm's subjects. Three typical examples of these laboured compositions of Aldhelm will probably suffice.

An example of Aldhelm's *Aenigmata Tetrasticha*:

> Once was I water, full of scaly fish.
> My nature changed, by changed decree of fate.
> I suffered torments torrid by the flames.
> My face now shines like whitest ash or snow.

The answer is *salt*, as produced by boiling sea-water.

One of his *Aenigmata Enneasticha*:

> A faithful guard I watchful keep the house,
> In gloomy night I walk the dusky shades,
> Scarce lose the sight of eyes in darkest caves.
> For hated foes, who waste the heaps of corn,
> I silent plan the crafty means of death.
> On hunting bound I search the wild things' dens.
> Not I with dogs will hunt the flying crowds,
> For barking dogs wage cruel war on me.
> To hated race it is I owe my name[1].

The answer is *a cat*.

[1] The answer as given in Latin is *catta*, or *muriceps*, or *pilax*; possibly "mouser" is the name meant, the late Latin *muricẽps*.

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One of his *Aenigmata Decasticha*:

Lo, many a draught of Bacchus to make men drunk I save,
Squeezed by the vine-dresser's hands from the yellowing bunch
Which hung from the leafy green of the shoots of the vine,
Filling with nectar of grape the innkeepers' booths.
I swell to the fullest extent with the juice of the vine,
And yet never feel in myself any evil effect;
No, not though the nectar that fills me be drawn from a hundred casks.
The child of the soil am I, grown up in the loftiest groves,
My substance is cloven and riven with wedges by rustical hands,
When oaks and when pines in the glades by the axe are o'erthrown.

The answer is *a wooden wine-cup.*

In Praise of Virginity, or of Virgins.

The long treatise in Latin prose on the Praise of Virginity is very hard reading. Aldhelm revels in difficult words. Fortunately the demands of metre protect us from many of his longest and worst words when we come to his treatise on the same subject in Latin verse; but he contrives to bring in a good many of them, and if he means to drag a word in he does not scruple to make long syllables short and short long.

This metrical version of his prose treatise he prefaces by thirty-eight hexameter lines addressed *To the most great Abbess.* Like the

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corresponding preface to his *Enigmas*, these thirty-eight lines form a double acrostic, the letters of the acrostic being those of the first line; but in the present case, unlike that of the *Enigmas*, the letters at the end of the lines come in inverted order, the last first, and so on. Not any of the letters give special difficulty, as *h* and *b* do in the other case, the letters being those of the line

"M etrica Tirones nunc promant carmina casto S."

Aldhelm's patience appears to have deserted him when he came to the thirty-eighth line, for he merely takes the first line and writes it backwards, not observing the division into words,

"S otsac animract namorp cnunsenorita cirte M."

The line thus constructed is one which it would be difficult to scan, with any regard to caesura. The whole thing seems rather childish, not quite consistent with the dignity of a great scholar, a great abbat, and a *maxima abbatissa.*

The treatise is addressed to the nuns of Barking, one of the two foundations of Earconwald, Bishop of London 675–693, presided over by his sister Ethelburga, and after her death by Hildelith. Like several of the monas-

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tic foundations in Northumbria and Mercia, this East-Saxon monastery contained both monks and nuns, under the rule of the Abbess. We know something of some of the nuns who are addressed by name.

Cuthburga was a sister of Ina King of Wessex, and therefore a cousin more or less remote of Aldhelm. She had married, as we have seen, Aldfrith, King of Northumbria, but had separated from him, as Editheldreda had from his predecessor Egfrith. Cuthburga and her sister Cuenburga were buried at Wimborne, where Cuthburga had founded a monastery after leaving Barking.

Eulalia was evidently a name taken by a Saxon or Anglian lady on entering religion, from regard for the memory of the saint and martyr of that name in the early persecution in Spain. Justina was a name similarly assumed; Aldhelm dwells on the story of the original Justina in both of his treatises on Virginity, and this enables us to identify her with the Greek martyr of Antioch. Thecla, in like manner, was a name taken from one of the principal heroines of ecclesiastical romance, the Thecla of Iconium of St. Paul's time, whose story is found in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla.* Scholastica, from whom another nun had

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taken her name, was no doubt the sister of St. Benedict, of whom our knowledge is derived from our own Gregory the Great[1].

Hildelith, the Abbess, had succeeded in that office Ethelburga, the sister of Earconwald, the founder of the Abbey of Barking. She had under her rule both monks and nuns, as was the case at Coldingham, Gloucester, Bath, and other early monastic institutions. She is mentioned in a letter of Boniface to Eadburga the Abbess of Minster, about the year 718, in terms which suggest that she was then dead. She certainly died before Bede, for he writes of her as abbess in the year 676, and speaks of her as having presided over the monastery many years, till she was of extreme old age. He describes her as an excellent disciplinarian, and an excellent nurse of the property and resources of the abbey. The cemetery of the monks and nuns was too small, and she had their bones taken up and buried in one place in the Church of St. Mary[2].

[1] These four saints appear in Aldhelm's treatise.

[2] Hilddigyth and Hildithryth were two of the Hartlepool nuns whose pillow-stones were found in their grave when the North-Eastern Railway cut through that earliest of Christian Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Their names are incised in bold runes on the stones, which are ornamented with fine crosses

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Of Aldgyth, Burngyth, Hydburga, we do not know anything. Osburga was a near relative of Aldhelm, but evidently not his sister.

The Prologue to Aldhelm's prose treatise on Virginity is as follows:—

"To the Virgins of Christ, most reverend, and with all the devotion of kinship to be venerated; not only to be honoured for bodily chastity, which is the part of very many persons, but to be glorified for that spiritual purity which is the part of few; to Hildelith, mistress of the regular discipline and the monastic life, and to Justina and Cuthburga; to Osburga, also, bound to me by close family ties; to Aldgyth and Scholastica, Hydburga and Burngyth, Eulalia and Thecla; with one consent adorning the Church with repute of sanctity; Aldhelm, the unworthy follower of the cross of Christ and suppliant servant

of the type found in the Lindisfarne Gospels. The rune-cutter left out the *g* in Hildigyth's name, perhaps because it was pronounced as *y*, and had to cut it in above the line. It has been surmised that Hild, Hildilith, Hildithryth and Hildigyth were all of one family. *Hild* was a Saxon war-goddess. The abbess Hild was born a pagan in 614, and died November 17, 680. The reduplication of the *d* in Hildigyth on the pillow-stone points to a strong pronunciation of medial consonants by our Anglian forefathers. In a similar way the words Christus and Jesus are spelled in runes on the Bewcastle Cross as *Kristtus* and *Gessus*.

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of the Church, health and perpetual prosperity.

"When I was setting out to attend the synod of bishops, accompanied by fraternal bands of my colleagues, I received with much gladness the letter of your gentleness, sent to my mediocrity. Lifting my hands to heaven, I gave great thanks to Christ for your safety, and that your pen not only showed your fidelity to promises and vows but also set forth the honey drawn from study of the scriptures. As I read each passage of your letter, with quick glance of the eye, and examined it with the curiosity about things hidden which is said to be implanted in me, I greatly admired your most fertile flow of words and the virginal eloquence of your urbanity."

Aldhelm wishes to be cautious, lest in his warm praise of virginity he should appear to reflect upon the moral character of those women who had married. He guards himself thus:

"But while giving to the glory of virginity praise without measure, we do not hold lawful wedlock to be contemned. That be far from the Catholic faith of the Churches. Indeed the glory of virginity has grown out of the law of wedlock, just as gold comes

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from the earth, the rose from the thorn, the pearl from the shell. . . . There is a difference between a wife and a virgin, St. Paul says. Great indeed is the interval, and wide the difference, between the richness of divine affection and the warmth of the lowest love. The wife craves to have her neck hung with crescents, her arms adorned with bracelets, her fingers with gemmed rings: the virgin desires to shine with the fairest adornment of transparent chastity, to flash with golden necklaces of virtues, to be adorned with white pearls of merits. The wife busies herself in delicate arrangements, the hair twisted into curls with the iron, the cheeks and jaws coloured with red antimony, like those of swine. The virgin, with hair unkempt and careless, will carry the palm of chastity and wear on her head the crown of glory. The one blossoms out into the vulgar pomps of ornament, like that woman in the Apocalypse, sitting decked out upon the beast, giving to drink of the deadly draught of the pleasures of the flesh from a golden chalice—a spectacle fair but pernicious to all who look on. The other ceases not to show forth, to all who desire to follow it, the sign of a chaste conversation, the example of the citizens of heaven."

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That is a tolerably strong sermon (and I have toned down some of its frankness) considering that the text was, "We do not hold lawful wedlock to be contemned. That be far from the Catholic faith of the Churches." The same inability to preserve an equable character of remark is seen in Aldhelm's address to the Britons, where he begins like a lamb and ends like a lion[1].

The list of Virgins whom Aldhelm commemorates by name and story (thirty-seven to sixty-four lines each) does not include some whom we should have expected to find. The omission of St. Catharine is not remarkable, for her translation only occurred in the eighth century, and her cult was for some time confined to the East. In the order in which he celebrates them they are as follows:

1. Mary[2].
2. Caecilia[2].
3. Agatha[2].
4. Lucy[2].
5. Justina.
6. Eugenia.
7. Agnes[2].
8. Thecla

[1] Page 332.

[2] These five names appear in the present English Calendar. The following names which are found in our Calendar are not in Aldhelm's list—Anne, Catharine, Etheldreda, Margaret, Mary Magdalene, Perpetua, Prisca: the reasons for the absence of some of these are evident.

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9. Eulalia.
10. Scholastica.
11. Constantina.
12. Attica and
13. Artemia.
14. Eustochia[1].
15. Demetrias.
16. Chionia[2] and
17. Irene and
18. Agape.
19. Rufina and
20. Secunda[3].
21. Anatolia and
22. Victoria.

In a certain volume, Aldhelm tells us, there are recorded the sayings of an Angel on this subject. The Angel divided the states of life not into two, virginity and wedlock, but into three, virginity, chastity in marriage, and the married life. He distinguished the three states thus: They are relatively as gold, silver, brass; they are as riches, moderate means, poverty; they are as peace, ransom, captivity; as the sun, the moon, the darkness; as the day, the dawn, the night; as a queen, a lady, a handmaid; as fatherland, harbour, open sea; as

[1] This lady's name presented difficulties in verse, and Aldhelm calls her Eustochium; in his prose she is Eustochia.

[2] This lady's name appears to have been too much for Aldhelm in verse. He evades the difficulty by saying of her and her sisters Irene and Agape, "Quarum per prosam descripsi nomina dudum."

[3] This lady's name is sought in vain in Aldhelm's verse in Dr. Giles's edition. It is there, however, by a play upon the word. Rufina is named as the older sister, the other was *aetate secunda*. Dr. Giles might have printed it *aetate Secunda*.

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living man, man half dead, a corpse ; as purple robe, old garment re-dyed, common homespun. Aldhelm adds a relative statement of his own: The three states are the three harvest-returns of the parable of the sower, the hundredfold, the sixtyfold, the thirtyfold.

Aldhelm sets forth the various studies which were, he did not doubt, encouraged at Barking: "Now the earliest prophecies of the Saviour who should come ; now the ancient Law as set forth by Moses ; now the fourfold relation of the Gospels as expounded by the mystical commentaries of Catholic Fathers, and digested according to the fourfold rule of history, allegory, tropology, anagoge ; now the ancient stories of historiographers and the succession of chronographers, who by tenacious memory rightly rummaging have handed down the fortuitous permutations of preterite periods ; now the discipline of grammaticians and orthographers, balancing in tones and periods, compacting in poetic feet by colons and commas." In some verses appended in one MS. to his Enigmas he speaks of a virgin dedicated to Christ as with pallid hand and slender needle working embroidery with gold thread.

Aldhelm was severe, as we have seen, in

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his remarks upon married ladies who decked themselves out in gay apparel, and he contrasted very favourably with this practice the grave and modest dress of the celibate ladies in a nunnery. But notwithstanding his strong language about the meretricious decorations of wives as contrasted with the chaste plainness of the dress of nuns, we have evidence in his own writings that in this respect there were nuns and nuns.

The nuns who were of high position in the world before their profession would not appear to have laid aside the splendid dress of their secular rank when they entered religion. Aldhelm describes the dress of one such lady. Her under vest (*subucula*) was of fine linen, of a violet colour; over this she wore a scarlet tunic (*tunica coccinea*) with wide sleeves and a hood of striped silk (*manicae et caputium sericis clavatae*); her shoes were of red leather; the locks on her forehead and temples were curled with irons; a veil (*maputium*) was tied on her head with ribands, crossed on her breast, and allowed to fall at the back till it touched the ground. Her nails were pared to a point, like the talons of a falcon.

There is an interesting story about the rich dress of an abbess in Wessex three hundred

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years after Aldhelm's time, which William tells in one way, often quoted, and the writer of her Life tells in a way less familiar. The lady was Edith of Wilton, a daughter of King Edgar, but not born in wedlock. She was remarkable, even in a highly decorative age, for the splendour of her dress, "being always habited," William had heard by tradition, "in richer garb than the sanctity of her profession seemed to require." Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester, in whose time such beautiful and costly work was done in the illumination of manuscripts, while he would seem to have affected a certain squalor in his personal appearance, met her at court in her beautiful robes, and, as William says, openly rebuked her. "Pride," she replied, "as Augustine says, may exist even under the garb of wretchedness. I think that a mind may be as pure beneath these golden vestments as under your tattered furs." The bishop—William adds in the *Deeds of the Kings*, though he does not say it in the *Deeds of the Prelates*—the bishop blushed with pleasure that he had been silenced with this brilliant retort. I like much better the story as told in the *Benedictine Annals*[1]. "Daughter," the bishop said, "the Spouse whom you have

[1] Vol. v, p. 637.

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chosen delights not in external pomp. It is the heart which He demands." "True, father, and my heart I have given Him. While He possesses it, He will not be offended with external pomp." Modern ladies who invent and adopt the various costumes of "sisters" do not usually devise a specially unbecoming dress.

We have a pictorial representation of the Abbess and eight of the nuns named on page 316, in an early manuscript of Aldhelm's treatise *In praise of Virginity* addressed to them. An engraving of this representation is given in figure 22 opposite. The manuscript is in the Library at Lambeth Palace. It was assigned to the eighth century by Dr. Todd a hundred years ago; the present Librarian agrees in assigning it to that period, perhaps late in the century. The capital R is characteristic of that date, but with some rather late features. The illustration is from a photograph of a seventeenth-century drawing of the scene, the actual drawing in the manuscript not being in a state convenient for photography. The Abbess is represented as reverently receiving the written treatise from the hand of St. Aldhelm, who is seated on an ornamental throne-stool, with the cushion

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REVERENTISSIMIS
XPI VIRGINIBUS OMNIQUE
deuotae germanitatis affectu uenerandis. et non
solum corporalis pudicitiae praeconio celebrandis
quod plurimorum est. uerum etiam spiritalis castimo
niae gratia glorificandis. quod paucorum est. Hildelithae
regularis disciplinae et monasticae conuersationis magistrae
simul que iustinae ac cuthburgae. necnon et osburgae. mihi
contribulibus necessitudinum nexibus conglutinatae.
aldgythae. ac scolasticae. hydburgae. et byrngythae. eulaliae ac teclae
rumore sanctitatis concorditer aecclesiam ornantibus Aldhelmus
segnis xpi cernicola et supplex aecclesiae uernaculus. optabilem per
petuae prosperitatis salutem;

22. ALDHELM, HILDELITH, AND THE NUNS OF BARKING

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in the shape of a bolster usual in Anglo-Saxon designs. The artist probably intended to represent the whole community of Barking, as named by Aldhelm. The Lambeth Librarian, the Reverend S. W. Kershaw, informs me that the manuscript is believed by Dr. Montagu James to have come from Waltham Abbey. Most of the Lambeth MSS., the Librarian notes, came from Lanthony; but this MS., numbered 200, is one of the series called "Lambeth MSS.," numbers 1–576, given by various Archbishops, and there is nothing to show by which of the Archbishops it was given.

One personal letter to a nun we may read. There is no evident reason for understanding that the lady was Aldhelm's sister after the flesh, but it may have been so.

Letter to his Sister Osgith.

"To my dearest and best-loved sister, to me sincerely and affectionately reverend, Aldhelm suppliant, unworthily bearing the name of Abbat, greeting in the Lord.

"Your kindliness knows about the baptism of the sister, that I asked the Bishop, who gave licence for the baptism of that nun, but only in private and secretly.

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"I salute thee lovingly, Osgith, from the inmost bed of my heart, earnestly beseeching thee that thou cease not to occupy thy mind with assiduous study of the Scriptures, so as to fulfil the advice of the Psalmist, 'On His law shalt thou meditate day and night.' And the same Psalmist again gives the same testimony, 'How sweet are Thy words.' Pray with supplication that all the sisters be mindful of my prayers, through Christ, who says by the Apostle, 'The prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' Fare thee well, ten times beloved, nay, a hundred times, a thousand times. May God give thee health."

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CHAPTER XII

The Letter to the Britons.

THE last of the writings of Aldhelm which we have to pass in review is his *Letter to the Britons*. Of this letter Bede says[1] that Aldhelm wrote, at the request of a Synod of the West Saxons, an excellent book against the error of the Britons, who celebrate Easter not at the right time, and do many other things contrary to ecclesiastical purity and to peace. The study of this book, he adds, has brought many of the Britons who are subject to the West Saxons to the Catholic celebration of the Dominical Pasch.

In the time of William of Malmesbury this letter had disappeared, and it was believed that the Britons had destroyed it. It has since been found, among letters attributed to Boniface. We thus have the unusually good fortune of being able to judge the remarks which William makes on it in the light provided by the letter itself. It will be seen how

[1] *H. E.* v. 18.

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completely William misunderstood the position occupied by the Britons some four hundred and thirty years before he wrote; that he did so misunderstand their position was only natural. This is the account which he gives:

"The Britons, who had once possessed the whole land which we now call England, were in servitude to the English. They had been thrust out of their ancient seats, and driven into the woods, where they lived an ignoble and half-savage life. Those of them called the North-Welsh [1], that is, he says, the North-Britons, were under the West-Saxon king; they were faithful in the performance of the accustomed duties of their servitude, and for a long time showed no signs of resenting their position. Kentwine found, however, that they were meditating rebellion, and he inflicted upon them so terrible a slaughter that they had no further hopes [2]. In place of their former condition, which had a shade of liberty,

[1] William would appear to mean the people north of the Parret, or possibly as far south as Taunton. His words are *qui Norht Walaes, id est Aquilonales Britones, dicebantur*: Bk. v. 215.

[2] Kenwalch was king 652–658, the years of the two great defeats of the Selwood Britons; Kentwine was king 676–685. The defeat of the Britons which is here attributed to him by William is no doubt one of the three victories of which Aldhelm speaks in the poem described above, page 236.

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they now groaned under the open yoke of subjection. As if that was not enough, they had religious superstitions, and put themselves outside the world by preferring their own traditions to those of Rome. Many things Catholic they rejected, but especially the true time of keeping Easter. Neither the custom of the Universal Church nor the arguments of the most blessed Augustine[1] moved them; they kept up a pertinacious opposition. On this subject frequent meetings of the West-Saxons were held, to consider what must be done to convert their branch of the Britons anew, and set them on the right way of ecclesiastical observance. The discussion of it went rolling along for many days; heaps of words were spent upon it. The conclusion come to was this: that the schismatics must be led by reasoning, not compelled by force. Anything that would tend to disperse their errors, anything that might meet their obstinacy, should be thrown into the form of a letter,

[1] This shows that William understood Augustine's visit to have been to these Northern Britons, not to the Britons in the land which now we call Wales. In his account of Cerne in Dorset he describes an ill reception which Augustine met with there. This again shows that William understood Augustine's journey to be to the Selwood Britons, not to the Britons of the west side of the Severn. See page 51.

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that its reasonings might bring their minds into the right way. This was easy enough, if only Abbat Aldhelm would undertake it. His manner of life made it probable that he would—his learning made it certain that he could—cure the disease of their superstition, however inveterate. He undertook the work, and the efficacy of its performance was as complete as the readiness of his assent. He confuted the false Pasch, he taught clearly the true. The thunder of his invincible reasoning was accompanied by the pleasant showers of paternal declarations. He addressed his completed work to the Britons, his prayers to God for its success. For that is the double work of the ecclesiastical dispensator, that in order to bring back wanderers he ceases not from words of correction, nor ever sleeps from prayer in his heart. The labour of the most holy man could not, did not, fail of its effect. He brought the wanderers round to the true way. To this day [that is, well on in the twelfth century] the Britons owe their correctness of practice to Aldhelm, although, from their ingrained wickedness, they refuse to recognize their benefactor, and they destroyed his letter."

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The actual letter shows how incorrect a view William took of the position of the Britons whom Aldhelm addressed. They were evidently not a pack of broken-down slaves, skulking in the woods. Indeed they were not the subject Britons, it would appear, but the Britons of the still independent kingdom of Devon and Cornwall. The letter is addressed "To the most glorious Lord, wielding the sceptre of the Western Kingdom, whom I, as the discerner of the heart is my witness, embrace in fraternal charity, to King Geruntius, and also to all the Priests of God dwelling throughout the Domnonian realm, Aldhelm, unworthily exercising the office of Abbat, a greeting in the Lord." The letter of a corresponding character which Ceolfrid of Wearmouth sent to the Pictish king was addressed "To the most excellent and most glorious King Naitan, Ceolfrid the Abbat sends greeting in the Lord."

Aldhelm's letter divides itself into six parts: (1) a statement of the origin of the letter; (2) a statement of reports that the British Christians were at variance among themselves, and an argument for peace; (3) a statement of reports that the British rejected the circular tonsure, and an argument that it was

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the tonsure of St. Peter and theirs was the tonsure of Simon Magus; (4) a still more pernicious offence, that they kept Easter on a wrong calculation, and carried to an extreme pitch their scorn for all who differed from them; (5) a strong appeal in the name of catholicity and of the door-keeper of heaven; (6) a declaration that to hold the Catholic faith is not sufficient to entitle a man to be included in the Catholic Church, if he does not observe Catholic practice. It is written in less difficult Latin than others of his writings, and is a fairly direct statement of the case, supported by many quotations from the Scriptures, and of course by some assertions which cannot be called historical. The final appeal opens in a dignified and persuasive manner, but it very soon passes on to strong language, and then degenerates into the *ad captandum* argument used at Whitby, which the wise King Oswy received with a smile. "In the name of our common share in the heavenly kingdom and the company of angels, with submissive prayers and bent knees we suppliantly adjure and entreat you"—here he lapses into violence of language—"no longer to abominate the doctrine and decrees of the blessed Peter with super-

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cilious contumacy of heart and shameless breast, and arrogantly to scorn the tradition of the Roman Church for the sake of some obsolete rules of your predecessors, relying in vain upon tyrannical pertinacity. For Peter, when he had with blessed voice confessed the Son of God, was deservedly thus addressed: 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give thee the keys of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' If then the keys of the kingdom of heaven were conferred by Christ upon Peter, of whom the poet says,

'Key-bearer of heaven, who opens the way to the skies,'

who that spurns his chief decrees, and contemns the mandates of his doctrine, shall enter with joy by the gate of the paradise of heaven?"

Aldhelm was very proud of the line which here he quotes from a poet

Claviger aetherius qui portam pandit in aethra.

The poet was himself[1]. The line occurs in his poem on the altars dedicated to the Virgin

[1] For a similar case of quotation from himself as "a poet" see p. 306.

and the Twelve Apostles. It occurs again in his poem in honour of St. Peter and St. Paul. Yet again he quotes it in his letter to Acircius as the saying of a poet; and yet once more he gives to the nuns of Barking the advantage of reading it as the verse of a poet.

Aldhelm's remarks under the fourth of the six heads of his letter show that the cleavage between the Britons and the English Church was very deep. If the English had been—as the Britons knew very well they had quite lately been—rank pagans, the British could not have treated them with greater scorn. It seems clear that to their resentment of the idea of owning allegiance to a spiritual potentate in a far-off land, there was added the traditional scorn—no long tradition either, only from a generation or a generation and a half ago—felt by a studious and learned and proud and exceedingly self-satisfied Christian Church for the unlettered pagans who had ravaged their lands and enslaved their people, and now forsooth professed to teach them that their Christian practice was all wrong. This is what Aldhelm says: "The Demetian[1] priests on the other side of the Severn Strait, proud of the purity of their

[1] Of South-East Wales.

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own life, haughtily abominate our company, to such a degree that they will not join us in prayer in church, nor in a brotherly way partake of the same dishes at table; nay, they even throw the remains of our meals to dogs and swine. Vessels and glasses that we have used, they direct to be scoured and cleansed with sand and ashes. They give us no friendly greeting, no brotherly kiss; they offer us no washing for our hands, no water and towel, no bath for our feet. And if it happen that any one of our race has for any reason to go and live among them, they do not admit him to their company until he has been compelled to perform penance for forty days." That last touch of forty days' penitential cleansing of an Englishman before a Briton would have anything to do with him, is very quaint; shall we say characteristic?

It may be taken as certain that if we had King Gerunt's reply, supposing that he sent one, we should have some very racy retorts; and we should probably learn a good deal of the other side of the question which it would be well for us to know. This we do know, that when King Cadfan[1] nearly a hundred

[1] This is the king whose memorial inscription is in the chancel of the church of Llangadwaladr, built by his son

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years before, heard of Augustine's claims upon their allegiance, and was assured that the creed of the Romans was the same as the creed of the Welsh, he replied that that was as strong an argument for the Romans owing allegiance to him as for his owing it to them.

This mention of the special hostility of the priests on the western side of the Severn conflicts with the statements of early tradition that the Bishops of Llandaff, disputing the primacy with St. David's, demeaned themselves by receiving consecration from Canterbury. The Roman historian Lingard accepts the statement that Oudoceus of Llandaff, with the approbation of Mouric, King of Glamorgan, was consecrated by Augustine himself, which seems complicatedly incredible. The earliest known consecration of a Welsh bishop by Canterbury is that of Civeliauc of Llandaff (d. 927) by Ethelred, who was archbishop from 870 to 890.

It was not the Demetian priests only who

Cadwalladr, *Catamannus Rex sapientissimus et opinatissimus omnium regum*, the wisest and most thought-of of all kings. It is very interesting to note that Aldhelm speaks of David as *opinatissimus regum*. The word *opinatus* is not classical, it belongs to the *Lexicon Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*—"middling and infamous Latinity," as Henry Bradshaw used to render it.

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maintained the acutely hostile attitude referred to by Aldhelm, nor the English only whom they treated with such contempt. Archbishop Laurentius of Canterbury and Mellitus of London had to complain that one Dagan, a Scotic bishop, coming to Canterbury, absolutely refused to sit at the same table with the members of the Italian party, would not even eat in the same house with them. I have noted elsewhere[1] the very interesting and pleasant fact that Laurentius and Mellitus and their companion Justus, all successively Archbishops of Canterbury, were after all enrolled by the Scotic priests in the list of those for whom intercessory prayer was made; the list is preserved for us in the earliest missal of the Irish Church, known to us as the Stowe missal, written in the eighth century, still resting in the silver case given three centuries later by a son of Brian Boroihme. And it is even more interesting still to note that Dagan, who treated them with such scornful hatred, stands next but one to them in this merciful and kindly list.

Aldhelm's letter does not bear comparison with the letter on the same subject sent about

[1] *The Christian Church in these Islands before the Coming of Augustine*, p. 129.

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five years later from the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow to Naitan, king of that most interesting and mysterious people, the Picts. There can be practically no real doubt that Bede wrote it, though he was yet young and it went in the name of the Abbat Ceolfrith. It is lucid, and it goes straight to the point; the Latin is very simple and easy. We cannot help wishing that Aldhelm, who was specially instructed to resort to reasoning in his letter, had followed the method which his northern contemporaries adopted. It is true that the circumstances were very different. Aldhelm was writing, uninvited, to an actively hostile people; Bede was answering a very friendly request for information addressed to his monastery. But Bede was master of his subject, and of the language in which he wrote; the subject and the language were the master of Aldhelm. Both writers were completely wrong in their principal assertions. They declared that the great Council of Nicæa decided the true date of Easter exactly as the English Church calculated it; and that this true rule of calculation was the rule given by St. Peter. In fact, the Council of Nicæa only decreed that Easter must always be kept on a Sunday, and that care must be taken to find the right

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Sunday, which must not be the actual day of the Jewish Passover; and the assertion about St. Peter is the merest fiction. Further, though neither of them suspected anything of the kind, the Church of Rome had more than once changed its method of calculating Easter, and the method which eventually prevailed was not Roman but Alexandrian. The Celtic Churches had not changed their method from early times, and that really is the explanation of the difference between them. In the years of darkness and isolation which followed the inroads of barbarian pagans, the Celtic Churches of these islands had been cut off from knowledge of the changes gradually made in the Christian Church with which they had once been in accord, and they had not followed changes of which they had not heard. To represent the Roman Church as an unchanging and unchanged Church is completely unhistorical, and markedly so in regard to the time of Easter. If any Church was unchanging in that respect, it was the Church of the Britons.

As to the actual points at issue, they were these. The Church Catholic had come, after a long experimental period, to the conclusion that the earliest day on which Easter Sunday

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could fall was March 22; the Celtic Church held to the old Latin rule that March 25 was the earliest day. The Church Catholic had come to hold that April 25 was the latest possible day; the Celtic Church held to the old Latin rule that April 21 was the latest possible day. As this was decided by the date of the full moon, it follows that if by the changed Latin practice the Church Catholic kept Easter on March 23, the Celtic Church, which according to the earlier Latin rule said that was too early, had to wait twenty-eight days for the next full moon, and kept Easter on April 20. This made a difference of a month in Easter Day. That was one point of difference. The other was this: the Church Catholic had come in course of time to say that if the moon which fixed the date of Easter, called the Paschal moon, was full on a Sunday, not that Sunday but the next must be taken as Easter Day; the Celtic Church continued to say that if the Paschal moon was full on a Sunday, that Sunday was Easter Day. This makes a difference of a week in Easter Day. In a very large proportion of cases, the two rules—the old rule of the Celts and the new rule of the others—fixed the same day as Easter Day, and there was no difference noticeable.

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There was a third point of difference, depending upon the question of the length of interval after which the sun and the moon are in the same relative position to one another. It is approximately the case after nineteen years; more nearly after five periods of nineteen years, that is, after ninety-five years. An early calculation, with which Wilfrith credited the Celts, took eighty-four years. The most elaborate of the calculations named by Bede and Aldhelm put it at five hundred and thirty-two years—a period which is arrived at by taking twenty-eight periods of nineteen years, that is, multiplying the solar cycle of nineteen by the lunar cycle of twenty-eight. I only make this statement to explain in a surface manner what is meant when books speak of the cycles in dispute. I do not profess to have any deeper knowledge on the subject. But I should like to add on the general question that the late Professor Adams, the famous astronomer, who was for many years a very kind friend to me, used to tell me that with all the care of all the Christian ages the method finally adopted gives frequently a wrong result; and that he could name one fixed unmovable Sunday in the spring for Easter Day which would more often be the

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true day than is our present movable Sunday, with its manifold inconveniences.

We can carry to a much later date than Aldhelm's time the hatred of the Britons in Wales for the English. Matthew of Westminster, writing in the fourteenth century, tells us this: "Those who fled to Wales have never to this day ceased their hatred of the English. They sally forth from their mountains like mice from caverns, and will take no ransom from an English captive save his head [1]." That, however, was a racial hatred; there is no suggestion of ecclesiastical animosity as the cause.

Do not let us go away with the idea that ecclesiastical hatred such as that of which Aldhelm wrote and Laurentius and Mellitus complained—I intentionally call it ecclesiastical hatred, and not *odium theologicum*, for I think the difference of phrase makes a just and necessary discrimination—do not let us suppose that this was confined to the attitude of the Britons to the English. We have seen how Wilfrith was driven from one Christian place of refuge to another, till at last he found rest in the one pagan country left. But we

[1] This is much like the American maxim, "No good Injun but dead Injun."

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learn from his chaplain and biographer[1] that he was treated in a manner curiously similar to that in which the Demetians across the Severn treated their English fellow-Christians. He is speaking of an expulsion later than that which sent Wilfrith through Wessex, and not of Wilfrith alone, but of those who were on his side. The anti-Wilfrith school of English Christians treated the Wilfrith school as the Britons treated the English. Wilfrith's opponents so entirely execrated his fellowship that if any abbat or priest of his party, bidden by a faithful layman, made the sign of the cross over the meat, it was cast out as a thing offered to idols; and all vessels which any of Wilfrith's party had used were washed before those of the other side would touch them.

Such were the amenities of ecclesiastical strife in the days which we call—in not unnatural impatience with the controversies of our own times—"the good old days."

[1] Eddi, ch. 49.

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APPENDIX.

A. Extracts from the Charter of the Bishopric of Bristol as granted by Henry VIII.

The Pope's Ratification of the Bishopric.

B. Notes on Wine-growing in England.

C. King Athelstan's Gift.

King Athelstan's Feast Day.

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APPENDIX A.

EXTRACTS FROM THE CHARTER OF THE BISHOPRIC OF BRISTOL.—Rymer's *Foedera*, xiv. 748, &c.

I. THE site, place and church of the late Monastery of St. Augustine is erected into an episcopal see and a cathedral church. The cathedral church is to consist of a bishop, a presbyter dean and six presbyter prebendaries. It is nowhere suggested that the cathedral church is a cathedral church of dean and canons, or that the cathedral church has any head but the bishop.

Ipsum scitum dicti nuper Monasterii Sancti Augustini ac locum et ecclesiam ipsius, in sedem episcopalem ac in ecclesiam Cathedralem creari, erigi, fundari, et stabiliri decrevimus, prout per praesentes decernimus ad eandem ecclesiam cathedralem de uno episcopo, et de uno decano presbitero, et sex praebendariis presbiteris, tenore praesentium, realiter et ad plenum creamus, erigimus, fundamus, ordinamus, facimus, constituimus, et stabilimus perpetuis futuris temporibus duraturam, et sic

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stabiliri ac imperpetuum inviolabiliter observari volumus et jubemus per praesentes.

II. The cathedral church is the cathedral church and episcopal seat of the Bishops of Bristol, decorated with the honours, dignities and insignia of an episcopal seat, the said episcopal seat to be held and enjoyed by the Bishops of Bristol for ever.

Et ulterius volumus et ordinamus quod ecclesia Cathedralis praedicta fit et deinceps imperpetuum erit Ecclesia cathedralis et sedes episcopalis dicti Pauli nunc episcopi Bristolliae et successorum suorum episcoporum Bristolliae, ipsamque ecclesiam Cathedralem honoribus dignitatibus et insigniis sedis episcopalis per praesentes decoramus, eandemque sedem episcopalem praefato Paulo nunc Episcopo et successoribus suis episcopis Bristolliae damus et concedimus per praesentes, habendam et gaudendam eidem Paulo Episcopo Bristolliae et successoribus suis episcopis Bristolliae imperpetuum.

III. The Bishops of Bristol have all the jurisdiction, power and authority, ordinary and episcopal, within the cathedral church and within the diocese, which any of the Bishops of Salisbury, Bath and Wells, Worcester, or Gloucester, have had within the diocese of

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Bristol [previous to its erection into a separate diocese], or which any other bishop in the realm of England can have.

Ac etiam volumus et ordinamus per praesentes quod praefatus Paulus nunc Episcopus et successores sui episcopi Bristolliae praedictae, omnimodas jurisdictionem, potestatem, et auctoritatem ordinariam et episcopalem infra praedictam ecclesiam Cathedralem et praedictam Dioecesim exercere, facere et uti possit et debeat, possint aut debeant, cum omnibus et omnimodis emolumentis commoditatibus et proficuis quibuscumque, ratione jurisdictionis seu dignitatis praedictarum, infra Dioecesim praedictam contingentibus, provenientibus seu provenire debentibus, et tam amplis modo et forma prout dicti episcopi Sarum, Wellen. sive Bathon. Wigorn. et Gloucestr. aut eorum aliquis, aut aliquis vel aliqui praedecessorum suorum infra dictam Dioecesim Bristolliae habuerunt, tenuerunt vel gavisi fuerunt, habuit, tenuit, vel gavisus fuit, seu habere, tenere, vel gaudere debuerunt aut debuit, ac prout aliquis alius episcopus in hoc regno nostro Angliae infra Dioecesim suam secundum leges nostras exercere facere et uti solet possit aut debet.

IV. The Dean and Prebendaries shall be called the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church, and shall be the Chapter of the Bishopric of Bristol, annexed, incorporated and

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united to the Bishops of Bristol in the same manner and form as the Dean and Chapter of Sarum to their Bishop.

Et quod praefati Decanus et Praebendarii et successores sui, Decanus et capitulum ecclesiae Cathedralis sanctae et individuae Trinitatis Bristolliae imperpetuum vocabuntur et appellabuntur, et quod praefati Decanus et Praebendarii ecclesiae Cathedralis praedictae et successores sui sint et imperpetuum erunt Capitulum Episcopatus Bristolliae praedictae, sitque idem Capitulum praefato Paulo nunc Episcopo et successoribus suis Episcopis Bristolliae, perpetuis futuris temporibus annexum, incorporatum, et unitum, eisdem modo et forma quibus Decanus et Capitulum ecclesiae Cathedralis Sarum annexum incorporatum et unitum existit . . .

V. There is a final safeguarding of the jurisdiction and authority of the Bishop (see III) over the Cathedral Church, and over the Dean and Chapter, and over their successors.

ac exceptis etiam et omnimodo salvis dicta jurisdictione et auctoritate episcopali in dictam ecclesiam cathedralem sanctae et individuae Trinitatis Bristolliae, et dicti ejusdem loci Decanum et Capitulum ac in eorum successores modo et forma praemissis.

VI. The Abbat's House, with its grounds

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and belongings, is assigned as the mansion, habitation, or palace, of the Bishop.

Et insuper, volentes commoditati dicti nunc episcopi et successorum suorum uberius provideri, sciatis quod nos, de gratia nostra speciali, ac ex certa scientia et mero motu nostris, dedimus et concessimus, ac per praesentes damus et concedimus, dicto Paulo Busshe Episcopo Bristolliae et successoribus suis Episcopis Bristolliae imperpetuum, totum illud magnum messuagium, domum et habitationem situatam sive existentem infra scitum ambitum seu circuitum dicti monasterii sancti Augustini Bristolliae, vulgariter vocatam *Le Abbotts Lodging,* ac etiam totum ambitum, septum, circuitum, et praecinctum ejusdem magni messuagii domus et habitationis, usualiter vocatae le Abbotts Lodging, necnon omnia et singula domos, aedificia, structuras, cameras, voultas, sellaria, solaria, ortos, pomaria, gardina, stagna, terras, et territoria quaecumque scituata jacentia sive existentia aut constructa seu aedificata infra dictum septum, circuitum, ambitum, seu praecinctum dicti magni messuagii domus et habitationis vocatae *le Abbotts Lodging*, aut ut membra pars vel parcellae ejusdem magni messuagii domus seu habitationis vocatae *le Abbotts Lodging* antehac habita, cognita, accepta, seu reputata existentia, ita quod dictum magnum messuagium domus et habitationis vulgariter nuncupatae *le Abbotts Lodging* et caetera singula praemissa infra

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ambitum, septum, circuitum seu praecinctum ejusdem magni messuagii domus et habitationis existentia de caetero abhinc sint et esse censeantur et appellentur mansio habitaculum seu palatium dicti nunc Episcopi Bristolliae et successorum suorum imperpetuum.

VII. The ordinary name is the Palace.

Exceptis tamen ac omnimodo salvis dicto nunc Episcopo et successoribus suis Episcopis Bristolliae imperpetuum omnibus illis locis, domibus, structuris, aedificiis, terris, territoriis, et caeteris praemissis palatio Episcopali assignatis et superius specificatis cum suis pertinentiis.

VIII. The Town of Bristol is raised to the rank of a City, and the County of the Town of Bristol, made a County by Edward I, into the County of the City of Bristol.

Ac quod tota villa nostra Bristolliae exnunc et deinceps imperpetuum fit Civitas, ipsamque Civitatem Bristolliae vocari appellari et nominari volumus et decernimus, ac quod totus ille comitatus noster villae nostrae Bristolliae de caetero imperpetuum erit comitatus civitatis nostrae Bristolliae, ac ipsum comitatum villae Bristolliae posthac imperpetuum comitatum civitatis nostrae Bristolliae nuncupari et nominari volumus et decrevimus per praesentes. . .

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THE POPE'S RATIFICATION OF THE BISHOPRIC.

THE Romans found themselves in a curious difficulty when they had got rid of Bushe. He was got rid of under a commission [1] dated March 13, 1554, to Gardiner, Tunstall, Bonner, and others to deprive the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of St. David's, Chichester and Bristol, "bishops, or at least bearing themselves as such," for having *de facto* married, which thing *de jure* they ought not to have done. Bushe's wife had been five months dead; he resigned before deprivation, and on March 19 a *congé d'élire* was issued for Bristol. John Holyman, a staunch upholder of the validity of Catharine's marriage, was consecrated Nov. 18, 1554, by Edmund Bonner and two of the new Roman bishops. York, St. David's, and Chichester, caused no difficulty. Those sees had for many centuries been acknowledged to be in the fullest sense bishoprics. But the consecration to Bristol took it for granted that Bristol was a bishopric although created by Henry VIII on his own authority after his breach with the Pope, and that it was vacant. These were two very

[1] Rymer, *Foedera*, xv. 370.

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awkward points for the Romans. How could it be a bishopric? And how could it be vacant if not a bishopric?

Pope Paul IV dealt with these difficulties by quaintly complicated methods of phrase, in a Bull[1] addressed June 21, 1555, to the Bishop of Bristol (John), in itself a very awkward address. The see had been founded during the most pernicious schism, which now, by the mercy of God and the piety of King Philip and Queen Mary, had been extinguished. It had afterwards been propped up by Cardinal Pole, on sufficient authority, as he asserted, from Pope Julius[2]; and now by him, Paul IV[3]. The origin of the vacancy was not defined, whether it dated from the original erection or was due to any other cause. Pope Julius had authorized Cardinal Pole to provide bishops for English sees, vacant in any way, and he had *de facto* provided Holyman as bishop before the approbation of the erection of the see. Holyman had *de facto* received the possession and rule; had *de facto* received consecration, which otherwise had been duly

[1] The Bull will be found in Nicholls and Taylor's *Bristol Collections*, ii. 66.

[2] Julius III had died that year, 1555, as also his successor Marcellus.

[3] This allows the erection by Henry VIII.

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and rightly conferred[1]; had ruled well and prosperously. The Pope absolves him from excommunication, suspension, and interdict; provides him as Bishop of Bristol, however the see may be vacant; gives to him cure and administration in spirituals and temporals; but first he must take an oath to Pope Paul and the Roman Church. The Pope begs the King and Queen to support him in his rule by their power.

On May 1 there arrived from Philip and Mary three copes, one of red satin with stripes of gold; one of yellow velvet; one of blue velvet; in each case for priest, deacon, and sub-deacon. Also aulter fronts of yellow velvet, of red satin with stripes of gold, of blue velvet and yellow satin, of violet velvet and green satin.

[1] This might raise a curious question as to "intention.

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APPENDIX B.

WINE-GROWING IN ENGLAND.

See p. 33.

THE late Marquis of Bute planted a vineyard in the open, at Castle Coch in Glamorganshire, in the year 1875. The Royal Muscadine on the walls of Cardiff Castle had produced large crops of perfectly ripened grapes, and at Castle Coch the soil, and the slope of the ground towards the south, facing the Bristol Channel about four miles off, were exactly what makes the success of the best vineyards of Europe. Two kinds of grape were chosen from among those grown in the colder of the wine-producing parts of France, the Gamay Noir and Millie Blanche; but only a small supply of vines could be procured, enough to plant an eighth part of the three acres allotted for the purpose. The skilful gardener, Mr. Pettigrew, soon propagated sufficient vines to cover the ground, planting them three feet apart. Another vineyard was planted later, about seven miles from Cardiff and close to the Bristol Channel. In 1893,

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when five acres in all were under cultivation, there were enormous crops, and the 1,000 dozens of wine made was worth, at 60s., the price it always fetched as sold from the vineyard, £3,000; but it has to spend three years in cask, and four years in bottle, before it becomes fit for consumption. The wine made in 1881 was sold by auction in Birmingham in 1894 at 115s. the dozen. There have been great fluctuations in the supply; thus in 1879, a year which promised well till the end of May, every grape dropped off and not one bunch was gathered; but the produce of the great crop of 1893 was sufficient to pay all the expenses since the vineyards were started in 1875. There are now fourteen acres under cultivation, and the yield is great.

It is clear, therefore, that William of Malmesbury knew what he was writing about when he praised in such high terms the wine-growing qualities of the valley of the Severn [1].

This passage from Malmesbury settled a question which was raised early last century, whether the vineyards mentioned in early times in England did not mean merely

[1] The above facts are taken from an article in the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* for April 1895, kindly lent by the author, Mr. A. Pettigrew, Lord Bute's gardener.

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orchards. There is no mistake about William's testimony here. Only one other place in England is mentioned by him as specially successful in wine-growing, namely Thorney, in Cambridgeshire. There the vines were grown in two ways, either trailing on the ground or supported on high poles. In one of the thirty-eight mentions of vineyards which occur in the *Domesday Survey*, at Rageney in Essex, the amount of wine produced is given—6 arpents of vineyard yield 20 modii of wine in a good year. If the modius in wet measure meant, as is said, 64 of our gallons, or 42, the yield was 1,280 gallons, or 840. It is not certain what the size of an arpent was; if, as has been maintained, it was roughly the same as an acre, differing only in the fact that except in Wilts it was used only for vineyards, the yield was 106 dozen or 70 dozen per acre. The abnormal year 1893 produced on Lord Bute's vineyards 200 dozen per acre.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the word "wine" appears to have been used in early times in England to mean merely the fresh juice of the grape. Thus we are told of Anselm[1] that he was so dear to a certain sick man that the man would have

[1] Dean Church's *Anselm*, p. 81.

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Anselm press his wine for him. When Anselm came to see him, he squeezed the grapes with one hand and caught the juice in the other, from which the sick man drank it. He was at last restored to health. A less complimentary name for the juice of the English grape was used four hundred years after Anselm's time. King's College in Cambridge had a considerable growth of vines, and in 1483 they paid one Thomas Figge threepence for pressing on the 7th of September seven gallons of verjuice from the college grapes [1]. Fifteen years before, they had used crab apples for the purpose, and had paid a half-penny a gallon for *le Stampyng de le Crabbez.*

Wine was regularly made from grapes, within the memory of man, at a place in this diocese only about ten miles from William of Malmesbury's old home. The miller at Slaughterford grew the grapes and made the wine.

[1] Willis and Clark, iii. 582: "pro pressyng vii lagenarum de verjus de Grapys collegii iii*d*."

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APPENDIX C.

King Athelstan's Gift.

See p. 218.

The ceremony of admitting a commoner of Malmesbury to his common-right has been handed down from the earliest times.

The steward cuts a turf of grass in the acre which is to be transferred, and a twig from the nearest hedge. The person to be admitted puts two shillings into the hole from which the turf has been cut. The steward fixes the twig in the turf and delivers it to the new commoner with these words—

> This turf and twig I give to thee
> As free as Athelstan gave to me;
> And a loving brother mayest thou be.

The steward takes the money out of the hole, and the new commoner replaces the turf. The money goes towards the expenses of the annual dinner. The following account of the proceedings in the local newspaper will serve to illustrate the text.

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KING ATHELSTAN'S FEAST DAY.

On Tuesday (Trinity Tuesday) was commemorated King Athelstan's gift of the King's Heath (or Malmesbury Common) to the freemen of the borough. At one o'clock the members of the Old Corporation met at the Court House of St. John for the purpose of receiving the young commoners who intended taking up their rights as commoners and paying the usual fines. There was a large company present. The chair was taken, in the absence of the High Steward of the borough, Colonel C. N. Miles (in South Africa), by Mr. M. H. Chubb, deputy High Steward, who was supported by the warden, Mr. John Wall, and the burgesses and assistant burgesses of the Old Corporation. The Court being formally opened by the Sergeant-at-Mace, the roll of officers was called, and the following young commoners were admitted, viz.: Messrs. Walter Hanks, John Gray, Maurice Paginton, Frank Clarke, Walter Harris, and Richard Boulton, in their own right as freemen, and Messrs. Ernest Albert Beard, William Brown, and William Keynes, in their wives' right as freemen's daughters. Messrs. Frank Price, Luke Jefferies, and William Ponting were admitted as assistant burgesses by paying the usual fine of 10s. each. The court then adjourned. At two o'clock the members of the old Cor-

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poration and friends, numbering about forty, dined at the George Hotel. At eight o'clock the trustees of the King's Heath met at the George Hotel, the newly-elected young commoners going through the process of balloting for the order in which they should receive their allotments.

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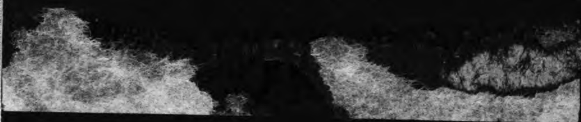

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